



## **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date** Monday 11 July 2016  
**Time** 11.30 am (Please note later start time)  
**Venue** Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

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### **Business**

#### **Part A**

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend. Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement.**

1. Apologies.
2. Substitute Members.
3. Minutes of the meeting held 20 April 2016 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any.
5. Customer Feedback: Complaints Compliments and Suggestions 2015/16 - Year-end (Pages 9 - 28)  
Report of the Interim Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services.
6. Quarter 4 2015/16 Performance Management Report (Pages 29 - 52)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
7. Scrutiny review of Attendance Management - Update on progress against recommendations (Pages 53 - 64)  
Joint Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Interim Corporate Director, Resources.
8. Review of the Committee's Work Programme 2016-17 (Pages 65 - 70)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
9. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
1 July 2016

To: **The Members of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)  
Councillor K Henig (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J Alvey, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, H Bennett,  
G Bleasdale, J Carr, P Crathorne, J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, J Rowlandson,  
A Shield, P Stradling, L Taylor, A Turner, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

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**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE ISSUES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 20 April 2016 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Armstrong, G Bleasdale, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, P Stradling, L Taylor, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

**1 Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Alvey, L Armstrong, H Bennett, J Carr and J Rowlandson.

**2 Substitute Members.**

There were no substitutes.

**3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following amendment:

*'At a Joint Meeting of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board'*

**Matters Arising**

26 January 2016

Page 3, Paragraph 3 – in response to a query raised by Councillor R Bell the Head of Planning and Performance advised that the plan was for 100% business rate retention by 2020. A steering group and working group had been established and it was reported that it would take between 9-12 months to come forward onto the work programme for Corporate Issues.

Page 6, Paragraph 2 – The Head of Planning and performance advised that an update was provided on the Welfare Assistance Scheme under Item 6 of the agenda, page 34.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest, if any.**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2015/16**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2016 until 31 March 2016 (Quarter 4), to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose (for copy see file of minutes).

It was reported that during Quarter 4 there had been 2 new RIPA Directed Surveillance authorisations which related to operations conducted by Trading Standards. In addition there were 2 new Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) authorisations which related to operations conducted by Trading Standards and 1 Communications Data application also relating to Trading Standards.

Councillor Lethbridge advised that it had been suggested that Members further explore RIPA to give a better understanding of the operations undertaken. The Solicitor suggested that the Consumer Protection Manager attends a future meeting to provide further detail, however it was noted that RIPA authorisations were extremely sensitive and limited detail on individual authorisations could be given.

Councillor Martin commented that he was unsure as to what likely actions scrutiny could recommend from receiving further information and added that he felt like they were simply making more work for themselves. Further discussion ensued regarding the topic and it was felt that it would be useful for members to have a short presentation on RIPA and the different types of authorisation/operations used, in order for Members to gain a better understanding of the process.

#### **Resolved:**

- (i) That the content of the report be noted.
- (ii) That the Consumer Protection Manager be invited to attend a future meeting to provide an overview of RIPA authorisations and operations.

#### **6 Quarter 3 2015/16 Performance Management Report**

The Committee received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of indicators (PIs), Council Plan and service plan actions and reported other performance issues for the this quarter of the 2015/16 financial year, covering the period October to December 2015 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager proceeded to run through the report highlighting key achievements and key performance issues for the quarter.

Councillor Hillary asked whether since the implementation of the new Sickness Absence Management policy, everyone who had been off on sick leave had, had a return to work interview and whether it was known whether all aspects of the policy had been fully implemented. The Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager advised that this information could be reported to a future meeting.

Councillor Hillary in referencing appraisals asked whether any action was taken against those managers whose staff hadn't been appraised within the 12 month period. Councillor Armstrong commented that in some cases events will have led to delays in appraisals being completed such as Ofsted inspections.

Councillor Wilkes commented that he was disappointed that not all actions of the new sickness absence management policy had been implemented and actions surrounding mental health referral were still being scoped.

In response to comments made regarding appraisals the Corporate Scrutiny & Performance Manager advised that maternity leave and long term sickness absence were no longer included in the figures however it was still impossible to reach a 100% target as there would always be a reason as to why an appraisal could not be completed on time due to manager absence or unexpected leave.

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that Oracle now included a facility which would notify Senior Managers when appraisals within their department were due to be completed by where previously Senior Managers had only been alerted when overdue.

Councillor K Henig added that in her opinion members of staff should be appraised prior to going off on maternity leave and if that was done on time there was no need to exclude this group. She further suggested that it would be worthwhile asking a representative from the appropriate service to attend a future meeting to provide more detail on the subject. The Head of Planning and Performance agreed that this could be arranged.

Councillor Wilkes asked when the change to remove maternity and long term sick from the figures had been implemented and questioned whether this was the reason that they now appeared better than previously reported. The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the removal of these two categories had only made a very minor difference to figures.

Councillor Stradling commented that a review report on sickness absence was due in the coming months and with such suggested that the topic be discussed further at the next meeting.

Councillor Martin in referencing the performance of housing benefits and page 32 of the report, chart 5, suggested that it would be useful to know how many people were in receipt of housing benefit as the data presented only provided a partial picture. He also felt that this would enable councillors to determine how the council were dealing with this burden and what impact the economic situation had on figures over the last 2/3 years. The Assessment and Awards Manager advised that these figures could be provided. In addition she commented that figures were monitored internally by tenure type and annual comparisons were made with other local authorities. It was agreed that the further information should be presented as part of the Quarter 4 reporting.

Councillor Wilkes commented that councillors could not assume that if less benefits were being claimed that less resources were required in order to process them. His comments were noted by Councillor Martin.

Further discussion ensued regarding sickness absence and appraisals and it was suggested that these points be taken back to the appropriate officer and further discussed at a future meeting.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**7 Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions 2015/16 - Quarter 3**

The Committee considered a Joint Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which provided details for each service grouping in relation to both statutory and non-statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions received in Quarter 3 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager proceeded to provide detail regarding complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the council during Quarter 3, 2015/16 and it was reported that during the period the council received 641 complaints, 43 statutory complaints and 598 corporate complaints. It was further noted that the average time for service to close a complaint had reduced by 2 days and the number handled within the agreed timescale had increased by 47%. Furthermore 100% of independent investigations were being handled within the agreed timescale and the average days to close had reduced by 27 days.

It was reported that although in recent years the number of complaints received had shown a downward trend, this had slightly reversed. This was however attributable to 2 events during quarter 3; the period of heavy snowfall toward the end of December and the traffic census which had taken place during November.

With regard to the ways in which customers were reporting complaints, it was noted that there had been a shift from telephone to website contact during the quarter. In addition it was reported that process improvements continued to positively impact the way complaints were handled.

The report further provided detail regarding statutory and corporate complaints for each service grouping along with detail of those complaints which had been subjected to independent review.

The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager also reported upon Local Government Ombudsman decisions and any action to be taken.

In conclusion she reported upon suggestions and compliments which had been received noting that many positive comments had been received about the staff and services provided by Durham County Council.

Councillor Wilkes raised a query regarding the 17 CAS complaints which had been fully or partially upheld and asked whether councillors and officers at an appropriate level were looking into this further to ensure that things were being done correctly.

Councillor Armstrong added that Councillors were able to approach the Corporate Director to seek information regarding case reviews, however must be appreciating of the fact, that the information was extremely sensitive and in many cases could not be disclosed.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**8 Quarter 3 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16**

The Committee received two reports the first of the Corporate Director Resources and the second of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Resources and Assistant Chief Executive's service groupings, highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2015 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager in referring to the Resources advised that the service was reporting a cash limit (underspend) of £1,442,000 against a revised budget of £17.967 million. This compared with an underspend of £990,000 which was reported at Quarter 2. Further details relating to the underspend were detailed within the report by Subjective Analysis and Head of Service.

In summary the service grouping was on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It was also reported that all MTFP savings were on track with some early achievement of 2016/17 savings.

In relation to the capital programme it was reported the original budget had been revised for additions / reductions and with such was now set at £11.616 million. Total expenditure to 31 December 2015 was £6.337 million and with such was below profiled / expected spend in the year to date. Details of actual expenditure were included within the report.

Moving on to the Assistant Chief Executives service grouping the Finance Manager advised that the revised General Fund Budget now stood at £9.522 million.

He further advised that the service grouping was reporting a cash limit under budget of £222,000 against a revised budget of £9.522. This compared to an under budget of £237,000 reported at Quarter 2. Details were provided in the report of actual expenditure by Subjective Analysis and by Head of Service.

It was further reported that the service grouping was on track to maintain spending within its cash limit and furthermore that MTFP savings for 2015/16 had been fully achieved.

Moving on to the capital programme the Finance Manager advised that the budget had been rephased from 2014/15 and with such had increased to £3.776 million. Further

revisions had also been made during the course of the year and with such the revised budget now stood at £3.991 million. The service had to date incurred £1.090 million of actual expenditure.

Councillor Wilkes in referencing the £1.442m underspend in Resources queried whether this amount which was not known about at the time of setting the budget would be available for spending and if not what would it be used for. In response the Finance Manager advised that the service would be looking for 16/17 savings early and an element of the £1.4 million would be taken into account. Any additional underspend would be added to the end of year reserves.

Councillor Wilkes in response commented that in his opinion, Councillors should have the ability to recommend what any underspend was spent on once it was known that there was more money in pot than the agreed budget originally said.

Councillor Armstrong added that the council was in strong position because of the high level of reserves held by the council. He further added that he considered the suggestions totally acceptable, adding that members could ask Cabinet to consider utilising any areas of underspend on different projects.

Councillor Martin further commented that at present there seemed to be a lack of transparency regarding money going into cash limit reserves as it was not known or reported what those individual department plans were for deploying that cash. Further discussion took place regarding cash limits and Councillor Hillary added that he felt that cash limits were not a good thing and that special cases should be put forward for any suggested spend. He further added that he would like to see these buffers reduced in future. In response the Finance Manager advised that cash limits allowed managers to take ownership of their budgets which in turn avoided a last minute rush at year end to spend allocated budgets. Councillor Hillary noted that he could see benefits in both sides of the argument.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the reports be noted.

**9 Council Plan 2016-2019 Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016 -2019, relevant to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This further provided members with the opportunity to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 4 objectives and associated outcomes and action areas identified within the Council Plan for the Council's Altogether better Council priority theme (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance referred members to paragraph 7 of the report which detailed the current areas of work and overview areas of activity. Further detail was provided in paragraph 8 relating to areas for consideration in the work programme and members views were sought.



Councillor Martin in referring to the Joint Meeting with Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, where consideration of the MTFP had taken place, added that there had been a distinct lack of prior scrutiny of budget proposals and suggested that a report should be available for scrutiny to consider in the autumn, outlining in detail how and what budget proposals were for 2017/18. Councillor Wilkes further commented that most officers would know at an early stage what their savings were for 2017/18 and what figures were in their allocated budgets. He suggested therefore that each scrutiny committee received on a quarterly basis details regarding budget proposals, in order for members to have the opportunity to comment early in the process.

Councillor Armstrong commented that he had no problem in receiving information in a timely manner and suggested that the Portfolio Holder should bring forward their plans as soon as they are available. He further added that unfortunately on a number of occasions the council had had to be reactive regarding budget proposals due to the timing of receiving the settlement from central government.

Councillor Stradling added that this had already been discussed and agreed that savings should be reported to OSMB and disseminated down to scrutiny committees. Councillor K Henig agreed that it was better if OSMB had the opportunity to consider and comment on proposals first.

Councillor Wilkes further commented that savings were based on a 3-5 year plan, not upon the settlement received from central government. By waiting for this information to come from government there was no opportunity to look at proposals in detail. He further made reference to Gateshead Council, who circulated to members, details of proposals relevant to each service area well in advance. Further discussion ensued and Councillor Martin added that he could see no reason why the committee could not ask for the scope of savings to be presented earlier and that any changes that did have to be made as a result of the settlement could be factored in at that time. He further commented that members did need the information earlier (with detail) as at this present time, were not getting the opportunity to scrutinise.

Councillor Armstrong suggested that the comments be taken back to the Assistant Chief Executive and a request be made that reports be submitted in a more timely manner via OSMB and that a timetable for scoping the budget be put in place. Councillor Wilkes further added that if services were unable to provide the required level of detail that a full explanation be provided as to why it was unavailable and when it was to be expected. He further commented that in his opinion the OSC's should be reporting to OSMB rather than the other way around as there could potentially be delays between meetings.

In conclusion the Head of Planning and Performance advised that she would take comments made regarding budget proposals back to the Assistant Chief Executive.

Councillor Hillary in referring back to the work programme asked whether it would be worth the committee looking at succession planning. He further added that he would be pleased to receive further information as part of review updates regarding sickness absence and appraisals.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted and comments be taken back to the Assistant Chief Executive for consideration.

**10 CRM Light Touch Review - Verbal Update.**

The Committee received a verbal update by the Head of Planning and Performance regarding progress of the CRM Light Touch Review group. She advised that at the last meeting members had been given a demonstration of the basic system that had been developed for Durham County Council and this had proved useful.

It was then intended that a representative from Northumberland County Council would attend a meeting to discuss the development of their CRM system and the Member Portal. Unfortunately the meeting had to be cancelled at short notice as the officer was unable to attend. It was therefore proposed that this session be undertaken alongside a site visit to Northumberland County Council headquarters followed by a workshop. Members would be notified as soon as this had been arranged.

Regarding the development of Durham County Council's CRM system it was noted that Phase 1 was due to be implemented in May so members still had time to input into the process and make recommendations on the remainder of its development.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the update be noted.

**11 Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.**

Councillor Wilkes had sent an email to Councillor Lethbridge notifying him that he wished to raise and issue regarding the recent email which had been sent to all staff requesting details of their year-end flexi time and annual leave balances. He asked why this was required when Oracle had facility to store all information such as this corporately and would allow managers to manage their teams more effectively by tracking leave etc and would save money by not having to undergo costly exercises such as this at year end.

Councillor Hillary commented that there was very little cost benefit from implementing a computer based system to record this data when staff leave cards had been and were being used effectively.

Councillor Martin further commented that it appeared that this email was interrogating individual officers and was unnecessary.

The Head of Planning and Performance added that this task was used for the simple reason of reconciling accounts at year end and was not about monitoring or reviewing leave taken by individual employees. It was suggested that this issue of leave entitlement and flexi time be raised under the review of sickness absence management and the Head of Finance (Financial Services) be invited to attend a future meeting).

**Corporate Issues Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**11 July 2016**



**Customer Feedback: Complaints  
Compliments and Suggestions  
2015/16 – Year-end**

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**Report of Oliver Sherratt, Interim Corporate Director for  
Neighbourhood Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present to Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC) the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for year-end, 2015/16 (Full report attached at Appendix 2).

**Background**

- 2 The report in relation to the Council's performance and key issues regarding complaints, compliments and suggestions is aligned to the performance reporting mechanisms, so the implications of this customer feedback can inform scrutiny of Council performance.

**Year end, 2015/16**

- 3 The full report at Appendix 2 provides a breakdown of all corporate complaints received by the Council during the 2015/16 financial year. It summarises the Council's performance in dealing with corporate complaints, explores the themes and identifies the action we will take to not only put things right for an individual but to improve wider service provision
- 4 The report also includes an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), as well as all compliments and suggestions.
- 5 We are required by law to publish an annual report in relation to statutory complaints. As the Annual Representations Report for 2015/16 will be presented to members at Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2016, and will include detailed information in relation to social care representations received during 2015/16, statutory complaints are excluded from this year-end report

**Recommendations**

- 6 Members are asked to note the information in the report.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

Financial settlements relating to LGO decisions are included in the report

### **Staffing**

Where there is an issue regarding a complaint in relation to staff misconduct or behaviour, this is handled in accordance with the appropriate HR policies

### **Risk**

Not applicable

### **Equality and Diversity**

Customer feedback data is monitored in relation to equality and diversity

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

### **Disability Discrimination Act**

Customer feedback data is monitored in relation to disability

### **Legal Implications**

Legal support is provided in appropriate cases

**Putting our  
Customers first**

**Customer Feedback Report**

**Complaints,  
compliments and  
suggestions**

**2015/16  
Year end**

*Altogether better*

## Background information

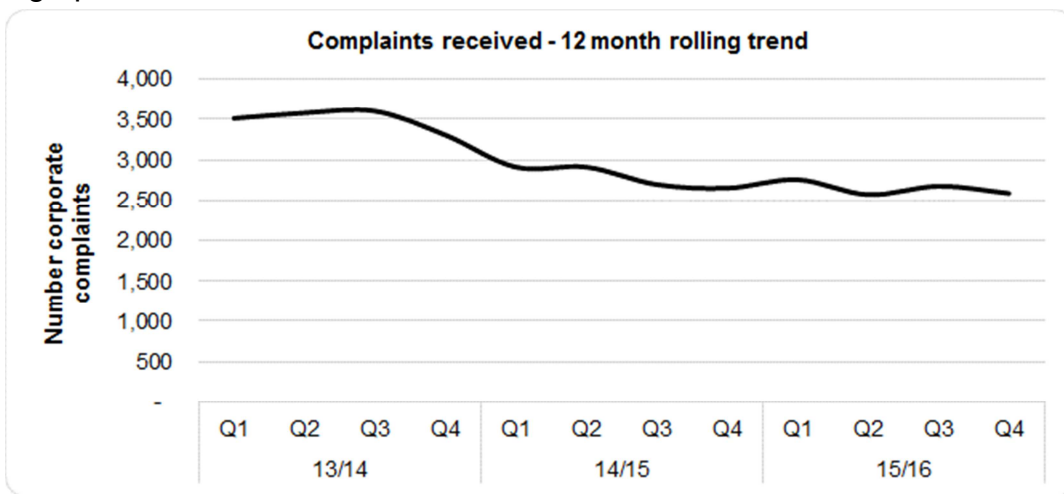
1. Customer feedback is a valuable tool. It not only helps us understand what is important to service users and what we are doing well, it can also indicate widespread issues and offer us the opportunity to put things right and improve our services.
2. There are two types of complaint. Statutory complaints which arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints which cover all other complaints. Each complaint type is subject to its own processes and policy.
3. We are required by law to publish an annual report in relation to statutory complaints. As the Annual Representations Report for 2015/16 will be presented to members at Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 October 2016, and will include detailed information in relation to social care representations received during 2015/16, statutory complaints are excluded from this year-end report.
4. This report provides a breakdown of all corporate complaints received by the Council during the 2015/16 financial year (1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016). It summarises the Council's performance in dealing with corporate complaints, explores the themes across customer feedback and identifies the action we will take to not only put things right for an individual but to improve wider service provision. The report also includes an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), as well as all compliments and suggestions.
5. The new process for handling corporate complaints was fully implemented in September 2015 following a programme of training and system development to enable better capture of information and a more streamlined approach. Services are now wholly dealing with complaints in the first instance, completing the initial service review and, as far as possible, contacting customers by telephone to ensure a more personal approach.
6. Should the customer remain dissatisfied with the service response to a corporate complaint, the complaint can be forwarded to the new Customer Feedback Team, set up within Customer Services to undertake independent review. The Customer Feedback Team is also working more closely with services to identify trends and opportunities for service improvement; capturing learning outcomes more effectively. Independent review of statutory complaints is arranged by the Complaints Team within Children and Adults Services, who commission independent investigations in line with the statutory regulations.

## Summary

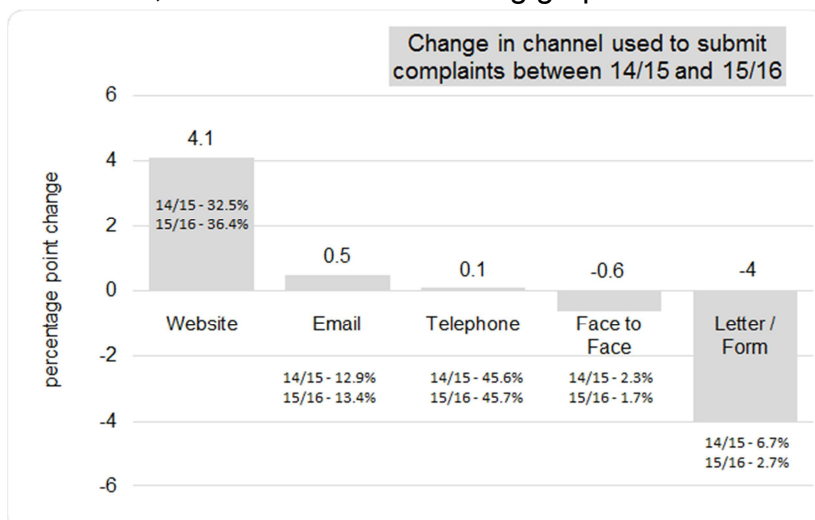
7. During 2015/16, we received 2,588 corporate complaints, a 2% decrease compared to 2014/15.

	14/15	15/16	Change
number received	2,649	2,588	↓ -61


8. For the last 2 years, the number of corporate complaints received has experienced a downward trend, albeit with a slight increase during quarter 1 and quarter 3, as shown in the graph below.



9. The slight increase in corporate complaints during quarter 1 followed the introduction of the new garden waste scheme and the impact of one-off issues associated with the implementation of a new service. The increase in quarter 3 is mainly attributable to 2 events; the period of heavy snowfall toward the end of December which led to a surge of complaints in relation to snow clearance and gritting, and the traffic census during November which led to complaints focussing on lack of notification and delays.
10. Analysis has been carried out to identify the channels used to report complaints during 2015/16. Although the telephone remains the preferred method with almost half of all complaints reported this way, there has been a shift from face to face and letter / form to website and e-mails, as shown in the following graph:



11. The increased use of the website reflects a recent customer satisfaction survey which showed that 92% of respondents found it easy to complete the web-form.
12. Process improvements throughout 2015/16 continue to positively impact the way our corporate complaints are handled. The average time for services to close a complaint has reduced by two days and the time to conclude an independent investigation has reduced by seven days. The customer satisfaction survey has shown that 79% of customers are happy with the time to respond to their complaint.
13. Of the complaints handled during 2015/16, approximately half were upheld (partly or fully), as shown in the following table:

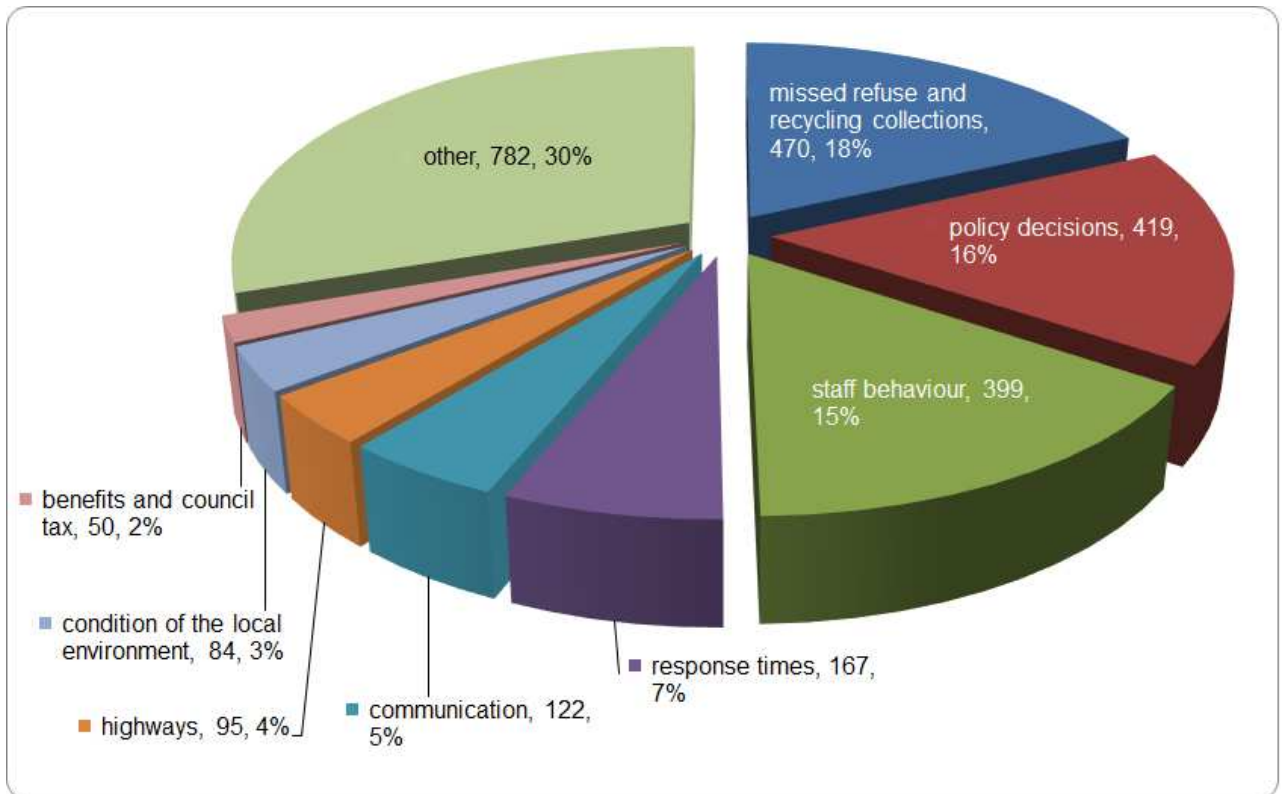
	Service Review		
	14/15	15/16	Change
% upheld (fully or partly)	57%	51%	 -6pp

14. Following investigation by service areas, some complainants remained dissatisfied and requested their complaint progress to independent review. Investigations have been completed into 193 corporate complaints, 27% (53) of which were upheld (partly or fully).
15. During 2015/16, the Local Government Ombudsman delivered decisions into 112 matters. Of the 44 subject to full investigation, 18 were upheld.
16. In addition to complaints, we also received 1,475 compliments and 505 suggestions during 2015/16.



## Corporate Complaints

17. Analysis of the 2,588 corporate complaints received during 2015/16 has highlighted three key topics which collectively make up half of all complaints received and an additional five topics which account for a further 20%, as shown in the chart below:



### Missed Refuse and Recycling Collections

18. 470 complaints, 18% of the total received, related to missed collections; 226 garden waste, 194 kerbside refuse and recycling, 43 bulky collections and 7 trade waste. When considering the number of complaints relating to missed collections it is important to note that, during 2015/16, our crews completed almost 13 million refuse and recycling collections, over one million garden waste collections and 32,000 bulky collections.
19. The vast majority of complaints relating to missed garden waste collections followed the introduction of the new scheme. Just over half of the 226 complaints were received in April and June, but as the year progressed and crews became accustomed to the new collection rounds, the number received subsided.
20. A cross-service working group, comprising representatives from refuse and recycling, business support and customer services, has been established with the objective of reducing missed collections. The team will review operational practices, contact handling, software systems in place, policy and service standards as well as benchmarking.

## **Actions linked to our policies and procedures**

21. Our service provision is reflected in our policies and procedures, and during 2015/16 we received 419 complaints as a direct consequence of carrying out actions in line with those policies and procedures. This equates to 16% of the total complaints received.
22. 42% of the 419 complaints related to our household waste policies and procedures: 125 to kerbside refuse and recycling collection service, 37 to the new garden waste collection scheme and 14 to the operational procedures of our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)
23. In relation to our kerbside refuse and recycling collection service, residents used the complaints system to object that; their household recycling bin was not emptied / permanently removed due to contamination (82 complaints), residual side waste was not collected (17), they were refused an additional / larger bin or a place on the assist list (15). Complaints were also received from residents unhappy that there are no specific bin collection times, they could not elect a collection point for bulky waste but instead had to leave it at the designated bin collection point, they could not have a smaller refuse bin and recycling collections are not scheduled weekly.
24. Of the 37 residents who complained about the workings of the new garden waste scheme, the majority (29) argued October was too early for the scheme to end. The remainder were from people unhappy that they were unable to transfer their subscription to a new property, objections to being ineligible to join the scheme and disagreeing with the decision that we will only take back empty garden waste bins.
25. Of the 14 complaints concerning our HWRCs, of which there are 12 permanent sites and one mobile site, half were from residents believing HWRCs should open later in the evening to benefit residents who work office hours. The remainder were as a consequence of site controls such as the ban on landlords disposing of waste left behind by their tenants, entering a HWRC on foot and the use of certain vehicles without a waste permit.
26. 17% of the 419 complaints related to our fees and charges, which are reviewed annually and allow us to provide local services which might not otherwise be possible. 44 of the 72 complaints related to the £20 administration and delivery charge to replace a bin lost, stolen or damaged beyond repair, seven to the standard £40 charge by our pest control service which covers visits and materials and five to the £20 subscription for the garden waste collection scheme. Six residents submitted general complaints in response to price increases at our leisure centres and the remaining complaints related to bulky waste charges, the charge for clearing an empty property and burial fees.

27. 27 complainants were dissatisfied with planning application policies and procedures, mainly due to disagreements with how a planning application had been dealt with or not receiving enough support through the procedure.
28. Our Street Lighting Energy Reduction Programme, which has upgraded more than 33,000 street lights with LED light fittings which concentrate light on the road and footpath areas, reducing light pollution to the surrounding areas, is continuing. During 2015/16, we received 24 complaints from residents believing that this change will lead to more crime as the light is not covering as wide an area as previously. However, a recent study concluded there is no evidence of any link between reduced street lighting and increased crime or road traffic collisions at night, which is in line with previous work commissioned by the Department of Transport.
29. 24 complaints were in response to our Revenues and Benefits Team following appropriate procedures. The majority (15 complaints) related to our policy that all unoccupied properties are subject to 100% council tax for the first two years, and then 150% if they remain unfurnished. The remaining complaints were in relation to housing benefit regulations and enforcement regulations.
30. 5% of the 419 complaints were from residents unhappy that they had received an enforcement notice from our Neighbourhood Warden Team which utilises various powers to help tackle environmental issues and keep County Durham clean. Although the majority related to being issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for dropping litter or not cleaning up after their dog, there were also objections to being the recipient of a litter clearance notice or a formal warning issued under section 46 of Environmental Protection Act.
31. We also received complaints about actions undertaken in line with our tree policy, the decision not to open on bank holidays, the new approach to storing and displaying the DLI collection, the implementation of 20mph speed limit zones around schools, our decision to host Lumiere, our street naming and numbering policy and our procedures for lowering kerbs.
32. All complaints received in relation to taking a decision in line with our policies and procedures are considered when the associated policy or procedure is reviewed.

### **Staff Behaviour**

33. Staff behaviour accounted for 399 complaints, 15% of the total received.
34. 40% (161 instances) related to the attitude of our staff, most of which was general unhelpfulness but a small number related to staff being rude, abusive or swearing. A further 11% (46 instances) concerned staff using council vehicles; speeding, using a mobile phone whilst driving or parking inconsiderately. The Council expects the highest standards from all employees and deals with any alleged shortcomings through our HR

policies and procedures. All complaints relating to non-DCC employees are passed to the appropriate contractor to be dealt with under their procedures. The contractor feeds back the results of their investigations to DCC.

35. Just over a third of the 399 complaints (141 instances) cited the actions of our refuse and recycling crews. Of these, the majority (78 residents) objected that their bins were not being returned to their collection point. In addition, 55 residents complained crews did not clear up dropped refuse / recycling from roads and pavements as they completed their collection rounds. The remaining complaints related to crews not closing gates or leaving bins open so they become full of water when it rains.
36. A further 11% identified staff's actions as causing damage to their property. Half of these 46 complaints involved grass cutters or refuse and recycling vehicles, a quarter involved weed killer and the remaining quarter related to highways operations.
37. The remaining complaints covered a variety of reasons in smaller volumes, such as school crossing patrols being too hesitant, stopping cars too frequently or stepping out in front of cars; and conflict of interest.

### **Response times**

38. 167 complaints, 6% of the total received, were from customers who felt that our response times were inadequate. Two thirds complained there had been no action in response to their request / concern and one third complained we had taken too long to action their request / resolve their issue.
39. Almost two thirds of complaints related to the repair of street lights or the delivery of new or replacement bins. The introduction of the new garden waste scheme resulted in 47 complaints, mainly from people who did not receive a bin (28 complaints) or the appropriate bin sticker (16) in time for the start of the 2015/16 scheme.
40. Other complaints related to the removal of fly-tips, perceived lack of action by Neighbourhood Wardens and time taken to cut hedges / trees / grass.

### **Communication**

41. Communication was the basis of 122 complaints, 5% of all complaints received during 2015/16.
42. 'Insufficient, inaccurate or unclear information' accounted for around two thirds of communication complaints. There were 2 main themes; information given at the initial point of contact and the wording of letters.
43. All cases involving the customers being given incorrect information or advice are investigated, fed back to the relevant team manager and discussed with the team. To ensure all staff have access to the latest training materials and are kept up to date with

legislative and process changes, regular liaison meetings are held between Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services. During 2015/16 our customer services team dealt with more than 1.3 million enquiries.

44. Some residents find the wording of letters, for example, benefit notification letters difficult to understand. We appreciate that these letters can be complex and although the information is prescribed by legislation, we are reviewing the notification letters to make them easier to understand whilst ensuring we meet legislative requirements. During quarter 3, we concluded our e-bill take up campaign encouraging Direct Debit payers to move to paperless bills, and received several complaints that the wording in the take up letter suggested this was mandatory. These comments have been acknowledged and will be considered when determining the wording of future canvass letters.
45. The remaining third of communication complaints related to traffic management measures, e.g. road closures, lane restrictions and traffic lights, which the complainant felt had not been adequately communicated. The Traffic Census, carried out in November to gather data for the County Durham Plan, resulted in 13 complaints from residents who did not know this was to take place and were delayed by it. Unfortunately, we could not forewarn residents in case they changed their routes to avoid the census points thereby reducing the validity of the data.
46. At any point in time, there are between 150 and 200 traffic management systems in place across the county, and of these the Council will be responsible for about a quarter, the remainder being the responsibility of utility companies, house builders or other private companies. As a minimum and as far as we are able, we ensure the information is included on our website. Depending on the size and duration of a scheme / road closure, we also communicate any disruption or diversion through a mix of channels, including social media, press releases, leaflets, posters, electronic Variable Message Signage (static and mobile), traffic management / on street signage. Furthermore, letters are being handed out to taxi companies to keep parents, carers and schools advised of any significant delays.
47. There were also a small number of specific complaints. One complaint highlighted that the public transport map was showing incorrect information; this has now been corrected. There was an instance when a resident was unable to submit information on the planning website and could not find the right person to contact; the webpage has been updated to make it clearer who to contact if there are technical issues. One complainant highlighted that no announcements of stops were made on the Park and Ride buses; we have arranged for leaflets containing the route and bus stop information for Park and Ride and Cathedral bus services to be available on each bus, and we are investigating the possibility of installing bus route maps inside the buses. Following an Instagram competition and the non-delivery of the customer's winning tickets, the Social Media team has amended their third party involvement procedures.

## **Highways Infrastructure**

48. 95 complaints, 4% of the total received, were in relation to our highway. The majority of complaints (28 instances) related to the condition of the highway; although the latest road condition survey shows an improvement within our road network and we were recently named, alongside Lincolnshire, as one of the two top performing highway authorities in the country.
49. The second most frequent cause for complaint was obstructive parking. DCC is responsible for enforcing parking restrictions such as yellow lines and restricted bays which are generally in town centres and other commercial areas. Where vehicles are parked in contravention of such restrictions DCC is able to issue a Penalty Charge Notice to the registered keeper. In the instance of a residential area which is not restricted in this way, no contravention is being committed. However, all obstructive parking complaints are passed to Durham Police for further action. The remaining complaints covered various topics such as roadworks, road layout including objections to traffic calming measures, highway obstruction, road safety and drainage work.

## **Condition of the Local Environment**

50. We received 84 complaints in relation to the condition of the local environment, 3% of all complaints received during 2015/16. The majority of complaints highlighted an issue rather than complaining about our processes, for example, levels of fly-tipping, littering or dog fouling within their local area, anti-social behaviour, overgrown trees and hedges, overflowing litter bins. Once we are aware of the issue, action is taken to rectify the problem.

## **Revenues and Benefits**

51. 50 complaints, 2% of the total received, related to incorrect decisions made on benefit claims or inconsistencies in data recorded within our benefits and council tax systems. More than 115,000 new claims, change of circumstances and work items are processed each year and we have steps in place to mitigate the risk of error and ensure information is as accurate as possible. A dedicated training team, a regular staff update and a robust quality assurance process targeting high risk claims and procedures, are in place. Identified trends are shared with managers and used to further develop training plans and process reviews. We also work closely with software suppliers, seeking opportunities to automate processes to further minimise the risk of error.

## **Other complaints**

52. The remaining 30% of the 2,588 corporate complaints received related to a wide variety of issues received in smaller volumes.

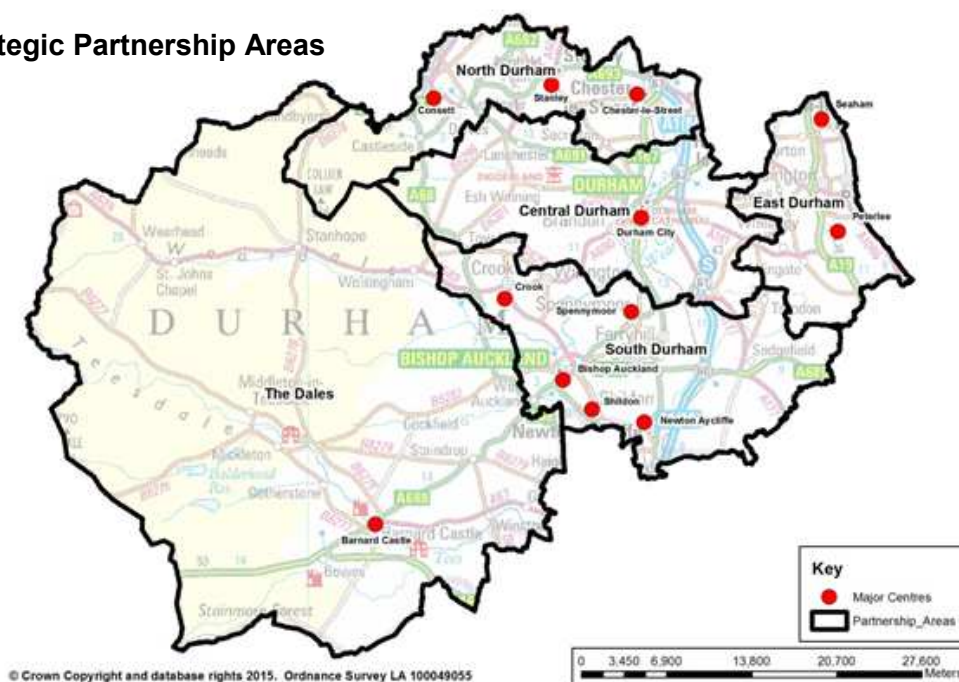
## **Corporate complaints subjected to independent review**

53. During 2015/16, 172 complainants requested their complaint be escalated to independent review. We declined to investigate 20 of these complaints as the Customer Feedback Team believed there was no value in an independent investigation, advising the customer to contact the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) should they wish to pursue their complaint.
54. During the same period, we completed investigations into 193 complaints, of which 53 (27%) were upheld (fully or partly). The majority of upheld complaints related to one of three areas.
55. The most frequent topic (14 complaints) related to our Garden Waste Scheme. 13 complaints were in relation to missed collections, and the final complaint was in relation to non-delivery of a new garden waste bin. These complaints followed the introduction of the new garden waste collection scheme and although there was a spike in missed garden waste complaints in April and June, as the year progressed and crews became accustomed to the new collection rounds, the number received subsided.
56. 10 complaints related to our Revenues and Benefits Service. Topic included housing benefit calculations, incorrect addressing of bills, Council Tax for empty properties, paying Housing Benefit directly to landlords.
57. 8 complaints related to refuse and recycling bins. The most frequent causes for complaint were missed bins, not returning bins to their collection points and not closing gates.
58. The remaining complaints covered a variety of areas including lack of contact in relation to an issue / request, procedures at a HWRC, planning terms of reference, recruitment and staff issues.

## **Analysis of data across County geographies**

59. In order to provide a geographic overview of the corporate complaints submitted to the Council; complaints data for the last 4 years (almost 11,000 corporate complaints) was analysed and mapped by the five Strategic Partnership Areas as shown on the map overleaf.

## Strategic Partnership Areas



60. Not all complaints could be included within the geographical analysis: those submitted without an accompanying address or by a complainant residing outside the County were excluded.
61. As it is possible for a small number of people to skew the results if they have submitted multiple complaints, the analysis was completed by based on the number of complainants rather than the number of complaints. Reporting 'per 1,000 households' enables comparisons to be made between areas of varying population size.
62. Overall, at a county level, there has been a slight rise in the complainant rate, as shown in the table below. It should be noted that there have been improvements in the data quality of information relating to complainants which could account for this increase in the light of reduced overall complaints :

Area	Number of Complainants					Rate per 1,000 Households			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Total	Rate 2012-13	Rate 2013-14	Rate 2014-15	Rate 2015-16
Central Durham	579	569	447	492	2087	13.3	13.3	10.4	11.3
East Durham	466	413	378	354	1611	11.4	10.3	9.2	8.5
North Durham	743	606	547	603	2499	12.8	10.4	9.4	10.2
South Durham	586	530	557	535	2208	9.2	8.3	8.7	8.3
The Dales	124	110	104	106	444	8.5	7.5	7.1	7.2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2498</b>	<b>2228</b>	<b>2033</b>	<b>2090</b>	<b>8849</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>

63. Rates have remained relatively high in Central Durham and relatively low in The Dales.



## Complaints by service

64. A service analysis of complaints received during 2015-16 reveals that there is little difference between areas. 85% of all complaints were for services provided by Neighbourhood Services and of these, 76% related to waste. 7% of complaints related to Resources, 5% to Regeneration and Economic Development and the remaining complaints to Children and Adult's Services, and Assistant Chief Executives.

## Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

65. During 2015/16, the LGO delivered decisions in relation to 112 complaints, 44 of which had been subject to full investigation.
66. Of those 68 matters not subject to full investigation, conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants and supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. The 68 investigations related to a number of service areas including planning, adult care, and children's services. 24 were found to be outside the LGO's jurisdiction and in 44 cases no further action was proposed.
67. The LGO also delivered decisions on 44 matters which had been subject to full investigation. Of these, 26 found no fault on the part of the Council, 6 ruled maladministration with no injustice and 12 found maladministration and injustice. Those cases involving maladministration and injustice are listed in the following table.

Category	Complaint	Action to be taken
Maladministration and Injustice	Failure to deal with late father's move from one care home to another	Council had already taken action to remedy the issues before the LGO's decision and to the LGO's satisfaction
	Failure to pass an employee planning application to a planning committee for consideration	
	Fault by the Council in the way it dealt with a complaint about street lighting	Financial remedy of £150 and a formal written apology
	Failure by the Council to correctly transfer a council tax payment the complainant made on a previous property to current address	Financial remedy of £75 in recognition of time and trouble
	Council's failure to rent an area of land, billing in error for rent and failure to properly investigate	Financial settlement of £100 and an apology

Category	Complaint	Action to be taken
	Failure to follow proper procedures before arranging a Child Protection Conference, then failure to deal appropriately with their complaints and provide adequate remedy	Council made a time and trouble payment of £350 and agreed to place a statement on file outlining the key failings in the child protection inquiry
	Failure to apply its policy to consider whether there were exceptional circumstances to pay a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) for more than 53 weeks.	Council to review the decision to refuse this DHP, and within three months review the operation of the DHP policy to ensure proper consideration has been given to the circumstances of other claimants.
	Faults in handling concerns about hens on allotments.	Financial settlement of £100 and an apology.
	Home care services commissioned by the Council were poor.	Financial settlement of £250. Council reminded the care provider of the importance of recording medication properly and made this part of any contract compliance visits.
	The Council's actions prevented the sale of a business as a going concern	Financial settlement of £1,000
	Failure to deal properly with the need for home adaptations	Council to commission an independent assessment of needs.
	Retrospective planning applications.	Financial settlement of £200 and an apology.

## Review of the Complaints Policy and Process

68. The new Complaints Policy was adopted in July 2015 to align it to the new process for handling complaints with a recommendation that it be reviewed in April 2016 to take into account any anomalies that became apparent during its first nine months of operation. The revised policy will be considered in July 2016.
69. A new mechanism for monitoring the quality and performance of complaint handling is now in place, and a cross-service working group has been established as a conduit for sharing this information, ensuring consistent ways of working and sharing best practice.

## Suggestions

70. We believe suggestions are essential to the ongoing development and improvement of our services, and carefully consider all received.
71. During 2015/16, we received 505 suggestions, compared to 305 during 2014/15. Almost 35% of all suggestions received during 2015/16, and the main cause of the increase, suggested that the garden waste scheme be extended into November. This was considered by the service area and the scheme extended to 17 collections from 2016. The remaining 333 suggestions covered a wide range of topics.
72. There were a number of suggestions relating to communicating via our website, for example, adding the option of a 'nothing has changed' button when renewing blue badges, allowing the congestion charge to be paid via our website, reporting envirocrime using interactive maps. The possibility of implementing all of these suggestions is being investigated as part of a wider programme linked to the development of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In response to a suggestion, we have looked into increasing the volume of our automated messages but it is currently not possible at the moment.
73. One resident suggested that improvements should be made to Millennium Place which coincides with the commissioning of an urban design study which could bring changes to this area following the Council's accommodation review and the marketing of the buildings around the area. We have noted the suggestion in relation to the location of 'The Journey' statue.
74. Suggestions are frequently received suggesting changes to our road system. However, if implemented, many would have knock on effects to the traffic flows elsewhere. For example, during quarter 3, one suggestion was to introduce a right only turn at traffic lights in Chester-le-Street. Although there is logic to this suggestion, making such a change would slow down rush hour traffic.
75. A couple of suggestions were received in relation to parking charges. One suggestion was to remove parking charges at Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre and although this was also considered, we were unable to implement as the charges not only discourage long stay parking by commuters but also cover the cost of the car park which otherwise would need to be paid by the taxpayer. Another was to allow free parking in our Park and Ride car parks. The Park and Ride service is operated and maintained using income from passenger fares. If the sites were used as a free Park and Pedal or Park and Walk base many of the spaces could potentially be taken by non-paying customers, reducing available space for paying customers which in turn would impact upon income and ability to operate the buses and maintain the sites.

76. There were a number of suggestions relating to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), including a suggestion to e-mail waste permits so they are received quickly and postage costs are saved. The foil hologram on the current waste permit prevents photocopies being used fraudulently but we are considering electronic permits with unique barcodes that could be scanned at HWRCs. There was also a suggestion specific to Potterhouse Lane HWRC, proposing that during periods of temporary closure a container is placed at the gates as a legitimate means of waste disposal. However, this was not possible as there is insufficient space for a container and for cars to pull over and residents to get out safely.
77. A suggestion was received to merge letters addressed to the same property to save costs. We have now introduced merging of Council Tax Bills and Benefit Notification letters where the name on the account and address is consistent.

## **Compliments**

78. We receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide, and we believe that understanding what is working well and appreciated is as important as knowing what is not working as well.
79. During 2015/16, we received 1,475 compliments, 352 in relation to social services and 1,123 in relation to other services. These compliments recognise not only the motivation, dedication and hard-work of our staff but also the high standard and value of the services we provide. The majority of the compliments related to satisfaction with service provision but a proportion of compliments conveyed thanks to specific individuals. As far as we are able, we have passed these thanks onto the individual concerned.
80. Staff in the Durham County Record Office were thanked for their helpfulness, hard work, time out of their schedule, excellent customer service and for providing comprehensive and swift replies in relation to various family and local history queries. In addition, they were praised for their high quality family history courses, Map Curators' workshop and website.
81. Our highly professional and enthusiastic Registration Services Team was regularly complimented for their care, support and manner in which they conducted wedding ceremonies, helping to make them happy and memorable occasions.
82. Throughout 2015/16, residents commended our Care Connect Team for their professionalism, help and support in caring for their relatives. The compliments included instances when staff had gone the extra mile, including a staff member who went out of her way to check on a client and a paramedic crew who thanked care connect staff after recognising they would not have been able to manage without them.

83. Our refuse and recycling crews received many compliments, the main themes being their helpfulness in coming to the aid of vulnerable people struggling to put their bins out for collection, promptly repairing damaged bins, returning to collect missed collections and general gratitude for continuing to collect bins in appalling weather. The HWRCs also attracted compliments, mainly in relation to the staff being polite, helpful and aiding people to unload the waste from their cars.
84. Residents submitted compliments to the Clean and Green and Grounds Maintenance teams for the speedy removal of fly-tips, resolving localised issues of littering or dog fouling and for maintaining the quality of our environment. During 2015/16, we also received many positive comments about our wildflower planting scheme. The wildflower meadows also drew attention on our social media sites: more than 170,000 people viewed our post highlighting the roadside wild floral displays with 4,038 likes and 1,027 comments.
85. The condition of the highway received many compliments, including thanks for the speedy repair of street lights, effective gully cleansing and filling in pot holes. Compliments were also received following the major improvement works undertaken at Sunderland Bridge and Milburngate Bridge during quarter 2. The severe delays expected by the works did not materialise due to a combination of our proactive approach, a hardworking and dedicated workforce and public support. In addition to compliments recorded on our database, social media reached nearly 53,000 people, attracting 640 likes and more than 80 comments, the majority of which congratulated us for finishing the job early. A number of properties were affected by flooding during 2015/16, and residents thanked us for the effective procedures we have in place to respond to these instances, e.g. speedy delivery of sandbags.
86. The new Customer Feedback Team is currently working with services to determine how compliments and suggestions can be better used to influence our learning, service improvement and organisational development plans. Information on the outcome of this work will be provided in a future report.

## **Recommendation**

87. That the contents of the report are noted

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**Corporate Issues  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**11 July 2016**



**Quarter Four 2015/16  
Performance Management Report**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team  
Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive  
Councillor Simon Henig, Leader**

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**Purpose of the Report**

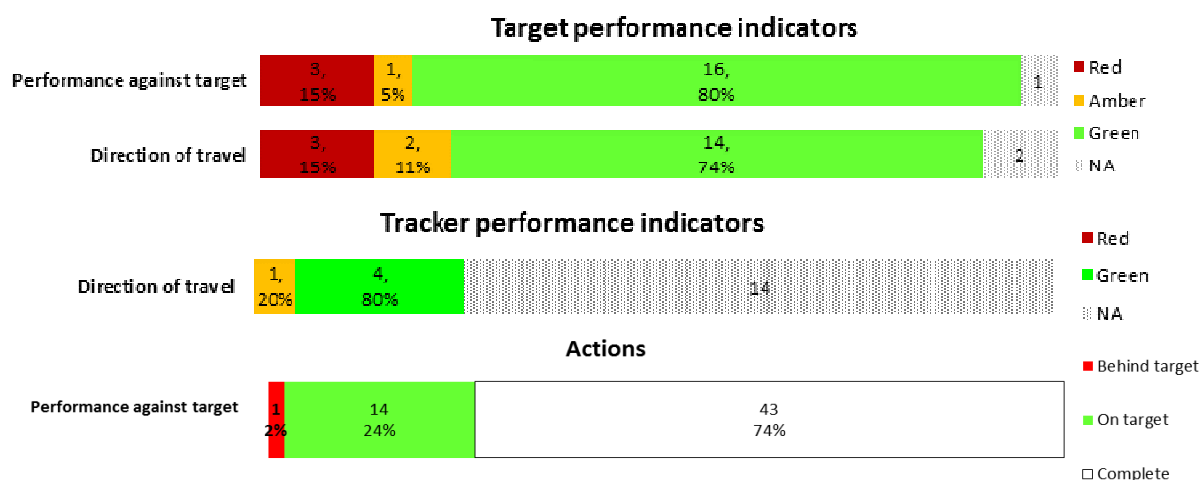
1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs), Council Plan and service plan actions and report other performance issues for the 2015/16 financial year.

**Background**

2. The council has delivered £153.2 million of financial savings since the beginning of austerity and these savings are forecast to exceed £258 million by 2019/20. Despite this, demand for some of our key services has increased over the year such as looked after children cases, freedom of information requests received and processing of benefit change of circumstances. However, it is encouraging to note that there have been some reductions in demand placed on some of our services. The number of incidents of fly-tipping being reported has continued to reduce although more incidents were reported at quarter four. Fewer new benefit claims required processing and face-to-face customer contacts and telephone calls received are reducing as people are contacting us in other ways such as email and through the web. Other reductions have been observed with fewer people rehoused and overall planning applications have reduced.
3. Against this backdrop of reducing resources and changing demand it is critical that the council continues to actively manage performance and ensure that the impact on the public of the difficult decisions we have had to make is minimised.
4. The report sets out an overview of performance and progress for the Altogether Better Council priority theme. Key performance indicator progress is reported against two indicator types which comprise of:
  - a. Key target indicators – targets are set for indicators where improvements can be measured regularly and where improvement can be actively influenced by the council and its partners (see Appendix 3, table 1); and
  - b. Key tracker indicators – performance will be tracked but no targets are set for indicators which are long-term and/or which the council and its partners only partially influence (see Appendix 3, table 2).

5. The corporate performance indicator guide provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources for the 2015/16 corporate indicator set. This is available to view either internally from the intranet (at Councillors Useful links) or can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk).
6. For next year's reports work has been carried out by officers and members on developing the proposed indicator set and targets (see Appendix 5) to ensure that our performance management efforts continue to stay focused on the right areas.
7. Members have recently raised specific issues of traffic lighting of performance indicators. We have therefore amended our traffic lighting system and introduced a 2% tolerance on direction of travel similar to that applied to variance from target. Detail of the change is outlined in Appendix 2.

## Altogether Better Council: Overview



## Council Performance

8. Key achievements this quarter include:
  - a. In 2015/16, 93% of telephone calls were answered within three minutes, exceeding the target of 80%. Performance is in line with last year (93%) (Appendix 4, Chart 1). 995,871 telephone calls were received during the 12 month period ending March 2016. 6% of these were abandoned, better than the target of 12% but more than last year (5%).
  - b. Footfall in our customer access points has fallen from 219,756 during 2014/15 to 192,782 during 2015/16 (Appendix 4, Chart 2). 99% of customers were seen within 15 minutes in 2015/16, exceeding the 95% target and better than last year (98%). Maintained performance is again attributed to the service's approach to booking appointments in advance.
  - c. Processing performance for housing benefit (HB) and council tax reduction (CTR) has achieved the 2015/16 year end targets.
    - i. Over 2015/16, the average days for processing new claims for HB was 21.16 days and 21.41 days for CTR, achieving the annual target of 22 days. During 2015/16, the volume of new claims processed decreased from 13,054 in 2014/15 to 12,017 for HB claims and from 14,313 in 2014/15 to 13,584 for CTR claims (Appendix 4, Charts 3 and 4).



- ii. Over 2015/16, change of circumstances were processed on average in 7.57 days for HB and 9.12 days for CTR. The annual target of 10 days has been achieved. During 2015/16, 159,086 change of circumstances for HB claims and 138,421 change of circumstances for CTR were processed (Appendix 4, Charts 5 and 6). The number of changes processed spiked at quarter four, especially in relation to HB as seen in previous years due to rents and income changes.
- d. Performance for paying undisputed invoices within 30 days to our suppliers has exceeded target for the fourth consecutive quarter. In-year performance was 94.2%, better than the target of 92% and an improvement of 3.1% on last year (91.4%).

The team continues to work with software suppliers in order to maximise processing efficiencies. Purchase-to-pay (P2P) work streams initiated in quarter three are now well established and are reviewing purchasing/ requisitioning processes including the introduction of dedicated catalogues for ordering aggregates. Streamlining the P2P process will continue to support prompt invoice payment and support overall invoice payment performance.

- e. The 2015/16 in-year collection rates for council tax and business rates continue to improve year-on-year, with the best in-year performance since 2010/11.
  - The in-year collection rate for council tax was 96.3%, exceeding the target (96.2%). This is an improvement on the 2014/15 collection rate of 95.8%.
  - The in-year collection for business rates was 97.4%, exceeding the target (96.7%). This is a 0.21% improvement on 2014/15 collection of 97.2%.

9. The key performance improvement issues for this theme are:

- a. The percentage of performance appraisals completed stands at 88.05% as at quarter four 2015/16. This is an improvement of 5.13% compared to the previous quarter (83.75%) and 4.96% compared to quarter four last year (83.89%), however performance remains below the 2015/16 step target of 90%.

Automated prompts and Head of Service monthly summaries are provided to managers to assist in actively managing appraisal performance. Human Resources (HR) Service link managers are also working closely with Service Management Teams to increase the number of appraisals undertaken. The development of HR analytics via business intelligence reporting tool provides senior managers with access to real time information in relation to appraisal activity for their area(s) of responsibility. Performance appraisal training continues to be delivered as part of the Corporate Learning and Development Programme and skills based training is included in the Durham Manager Programme to support managers in providing feedback to employees through the appraisal process. An internal audit was undertaken during January/February 2016 and a report is being prepared to identify required improvements to the performance appraisal process.

A number of changes were made in 2015/16 to our appraisal process to improve manager confidence in the system. Some managers complained that appraisal performance was being skewed by employees on maternity leave

and long-term sickness. This can be particularly acute in smaller teams. The definition for how appraisal performance is calculated was therefore amended at the start of 2015/16 to exclude employees on long-term sickness or maternity leave whose appraisal interview has fallen due. When quarter three performance was reported to this committee, Members queried what effect this definition change had on reported performance. Testing carried out when the changes was introduced showed that it improved reported performance by less than one percentage point (0.98%). The way this change has been applied is that employees who are on long-term sick (20+ working days) or maternity leave at the end of the reporting period are identified automatically through our IT systems. If they had an appraisal event falling due during their absence then the system is set up to discount them from the calculation. The same methodology is applied to appraisal rate analytics which are made available to managers through our business intelligence dashboard.

Members were also concerned that discounting employees on maternity leave from the calculation may lead to those employees not being provided with adequate support from their manager. The council's performance appraisal guidance requires managers to carry out an appraisal of employees where it is anticipated that they will be absent for any length of time and individual appraisal reminders continue to be sent to managers. This will include employees leaving in a planned way on maternity leave, external secondments or for medical reasons. In terms of support, the council's policy requires managers to communicate regularly with employees on maternity leave during their period of absence. They are required to keep them up to date with any workplace developments, vacancies and training opportunities that may arise during the course of their leave. Employees on maternity leave can also participate in up to 10 keeping in touch (KIT) days where they can work without bringing their leave to an end. KIT days are not limited to an employee's normal job and can include attending training events, meetings and briefings. Any KIT days must be mutually agreed. Towards the end of their leave, the manager will discuss return to work arrangements. The employee may wish to discuss the possibility of flexible working.

- b. In the year to 31 March 2016 the average days' sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) excluding school based employees is 11.63 days, and 9.44 days including school based employees. Whilst performance is an improvement from that reported at quarter three (12.13 and 9.71 days respectively) and quarter four last year (12.14 and 9.58 days respectively) this is higher than the improvement targets that were set for 2015/16 of 11.5 days and 8.5 days respectively. However, the absence rate for council staff (excluding school based employees) has reduced quarter on quarter over 2015/16 and only narrowly missed target by 1.1%. Also over the same period, 50.32% of posts recorded no sickness absence (excluding schools) which is an improvement when compared to quarter three 2015/16 (47.89%) and quarter four 2014/15 (45%).

Sickness Absence reports are taken to the appropriate Attendance Management Group (AMG) for each service grouping. HR Officers are working with managers to ensure compliance with the Sickness Absence Management Policy and are actively managing sickness absence. The AMGs have analysed performance data and have been able to identify hotspot areas where the level of sickness absence may necessitate more detailed work to bring about the required improvement to performance. An update on

the completed scrutiny review in relation to attendance management is due to Corporate Issues overview and scrutiny committee in July.

When quarter three performance was reported to this committee, Members queried whether return to work interviews are being completed by managers following periods of sickness absence by employees within their team.

Managers are required to record periods of employee sickness absence on the ResourceLink system and subsequently log any return to work interviews that have been completed and upload interview paperwork that has been completed. Figures for 2015/16 show that 96.03% of RTW interviews were logged in the year. A HR business lead is assigned to each of our service groupings. These officers work with senior management teams and highlight any non-compliance with the council's attendance management policy.

- c. The percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days was 79% this quarter, an improvement of two percentage points on the previous quarter (77%) and six percentage points on quarter four 2014/15 (73%). However, performance remains below the national target of 85%. The number of FOI/EIR requests received has increased considerably from 883 in 2012/13 to 1,253 this year (see Appendix 4, Chart 7).

10. There is one key Council Plan action which has not achieved target in this theme. Developing a strategic approach towards workforce development planning that ensures adequate support for managers in relation to progressing planned Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings and meeting future business needs. This action has been revisited as part of the new Organisational Development Strategy Action Plan and the target date has been revised from March 2016 to April 2017.

11. The key risks to successfully delivering the objectives of this theme are:

- a. If there was to be slippage in the delivery of the agreed MTFP savings projects, this will require further savings to be made from other areas, which may result in further service reductions and job losses. Management consider it possible that this risk could occur, which will result in a funding shortfall, damaged reputation and reduced levels of service delivery. To mitigate the risk, a programme management approach for key projects has been established and embedded across the council. Monitoring by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet provides assurance over the implementation of the agreed MTFP savings projects. It should be recognised that this will be a significant risk for at least the next four years.
- b. Ongoing Government funding cuts which now extend to at least 2019/20 will continue to have an increasing major impact on all council services. Management consider it highly probable that this risk could occur, and to mitigate the risk, sound financial forecasting is in place based on thorough examination of the Government's red book plans. This will also be a significant risk for at least the next four years.
- c. If we were to fail to comply with Central Government's Public Services Network Code of Connection criteria for our computer applications, this would put some of our core business processes at risk, such as revenues and benefits, which rely on secure transfer of personal data. The Government set criteria for the Public Services Network Code of Connection compliance has

changed again, one of the requirements being the need to submit a risk register, which is being compiled for submission in June 2016.

### **Recommendations and Reasons**

12. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and consider any performance issues arising there with.

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**Contact: Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance**  
**Tel: 03000 268071 E-Mail [jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance** - Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

**Staffing** - Performance against a number of relevant corporate health Performance Indicators (PIs) has been included to monitor staffing issues.

**Risk** - Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly monitoring report.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty** - Corporate health PIs are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

**Accommodation** - Not applicable

**Crime and Disorder** - A number of PIs and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

**Human Rights** - Not applicable

**Consultation** - Not applicable

**Procurement** - Not applicable

**Disability Issues** - Employees with a disability are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

**Legal Implications** - Not applicable

## Appendix 2: Key to symbols used within the report

Our traffic lighting system has been amended this quarter, introducing a 2% tolerance to variance from previous performance and comparator groups, similar to that applied to variance from target. Detail of the change is outlined in the table below:

### Performance Indicators:

Previous traffic light system		Current (amended) traffic light system			
<i>Variation from previous performance and comparator benchmarking groups</i>		<i>Variation from previous performance and comparator benchmarking groups</i>		<i>Variation from target</i>	
Better than comparable period / comparator group	<b>Green</b>	Same or better than comparable period / comparator group	<b>Green</b>	Meeting/Exceeding target	<b>Green</b>
Same as comparable period / comparator group	<b>Amber</b>	Worse than comparable period / comparator group (within 2% tolerance)	<b>Amber</b>	Worse than target (within 2% tolerance)	<b>Amber</b>
Worse than comparable period / comparator group	<b>Red</b>	Worse than comparable period / comparator group (greater than 2%)	<b>Red</b>	Worse than target (outside of 2% tolerance)	<b>Red</b>

Where the traffic light system appears in this report, they have been applied to the most recently available information.

### Nearest Neighbour Benchmarking:

The nearest neighbour model was developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), one of the professional accountancy bodies in the UK. CIPFA has produced a list of 15 local authorities which Durham is statistically close to when you look at a number of characteristics. The 15 authorities that are in the nearest statistical neighbours group for Durham using the CIPFA model are: Barnsley, Wakefield, Doncaster, Rotherham, Wigan, Kirklees, St Helens, Calderdale, Dudley, Northumberland, Tameside, Sheffield, Gateshead, Stockton-on-Tees and Stoke-on-Trent.

We also use other neighbour groups to compare our performance. More detail of these can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk).

### Actions:

<b>WHITE</b>	Complete (action achieved by deadline/achieved ahead of deadline)
<b>GREEN</b>	Action on track to be achieved by the deadline
<b>RED</b>	Action not achieved by the deadline/unlikely to be achieved by the deadline

## Appendix 3: Summary of Key Performance Indicators

**Table 1: Key Target Indicators**

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>											
56	NS20	Percentage of abandoned calls	6	2015/16	12	GREEN	5	RED			
57	NS22	Percentage of telephone calls answered within three minutes	93	2015/16	80	GREEN	93	GREEN			
58	NS24	Percentage of customers seen within 15 minutes at a customer access point	99	2015/16	95	GREEN	98	GREEN			
59	NS25	Percentage of customers with an appointment at a customer access point who are seen on time	Available Q2 2016/17	NA	95	NA	New indicator	NA			
60	RES/038	Percentage all ICT service desk incidents resolved on time	94	Jan - Mar 2016	90	GREEN	93	GREEN			
61	RES/NI/181a1	Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims (days)	21.16	2015/16	22.00	GREEN	20.61	RED	22.00 Not comparable	23** Not comparable	Oct - Dec 2015
62	RES/NI/181a2	Average time taken to process new council tax reduction claims (days)	21.41	2015/16	22.00	GREEN	21.29	AMBER			
63	RES/NI/181b1	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	7.57	2015/16	10.00	GREEN	7.33	RED	10.00 Not comparable	11** Not comparable	Oct - Dec 2015

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
64	RES/NI/181b2	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims (days)	9.12	2015/16	10.00	GREEN	9.46	GREEN			
65	RES/001	Savings delivered against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (£ million)	16.3	As at Apr 2016	16.3	GREEN	23.0	NA			
66	RES/002	Percentage of council tax collected in-year	96.32	2015/16	96.20	GREEN	95.80	GREEN	97.00 Not comparable	95.89* Not comparable	2014/15
67	RES/003	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	97.40	2015/16	96.70	GREEN	97.20	GREEN	98.11 Not comparable	98* Not comparable	2014/15
68	RES/129	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.56	Jan - Mar 2016	98.50	GREEN	99.18	GREEN			
69	RES/130	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.21	Jan - Mar 2016	98.50	GREEN	99.50	AMBER			
70	REDPI49b	Total of income and savings from solar installations on council owned buildings (£)	261,210	2014/15	242,000	GREEN	214,000	GREEN			
71	REDPI68	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates in county council buildings	95.0	Jan - Mar 2016	97.0	GREEN	97.1	GREEN			
72	RES/LPI/010	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	94.2	2015/16	92.0	GREEN	91.4	GREEN			



Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
73	ACE006	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines	79	Jan - Mar 2016	85	RED	73	GREEN			
74	RES/LPI/012	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services including school staff	9.44	2015/16	8.50	RED	9.58	GREEN			
75	RES/LPI/012a	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services excluding school staff	11.63	2015/16	11.50	AMBER	12.14	GREEN			
76	RES/011	Percentage of performance appraisals completed in current post in rolling year period (excluding schools)	88.05	2015/16	90.00	RED	83.89	GREEN			

**Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators**

Page 40 Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>											
172	NS43a	Number of customer contacts - face to face	192,782	2015/16	187,956	Not comparable [1]	219,756	Not comparable [1]			
173	NS43b	Number of customer contacts -telephone	995,871	2015/16	1,015,211	NA	989,422	NA			
174	NS43c	Number of customer contacts - web forms	86,034	2015/16	53,997	NA	16,886	NA			
175	NS43d	Number of customer contacts - emails	65,055	2015/16	48,661	NA [1]	NA	NA [1]			
176	RES/013	Staff aged under 25 as a percentage of post count	5.77	As at Mar 2016	5.69	NA	5.52	NA			
177	RES/014	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	40.15	As at Mar 2016	39.89	NA	38.80	NA			
178	RES/LPI/011a	Women in the top five percent of earners	54.03	As at Mar 2016	52.54	NA	52.03	NA			
179	RES/LPI/011bi	Black and minority ethnic (BME) as a percentage of post count	1.6	As at Mar 2016	1.57	NA	1.53	NA			
180	RES/LPI/011ci	Staff with a recorded disability as a percentage of post count	2.75	As at Mar 2016	2.75	NA	2.73	NA			
181	RES028	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by social sector size criteria	685,921.53	2015/16	464,294.50	NA	994,067.33	NA			

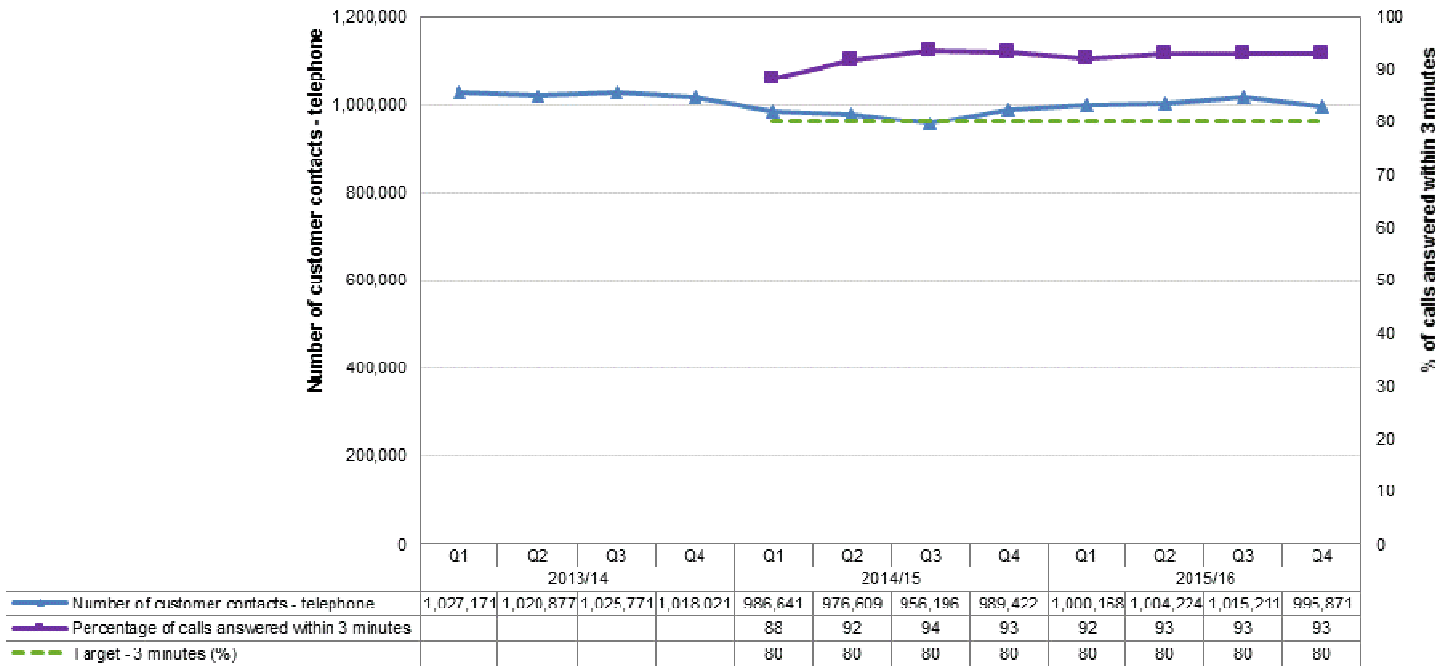
Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
182	RES029	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by local housing allowance reforms	291,647.15	2015/16	108,986.47	NA	131,569.00	NA			
183	ACE016	Percentage of children in poverty (quarterly proxy measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	22.3	As at Aug 2015	22.5	GREEN	23.0	GREEN	16.1 RED	22.9* GREEN	As at Aug 2015
184	ACE017	Percentage of children in poverty (national annual measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	22.5	2013	22.6	GREEN	22.6	GREEN	18.6 RED	23.3* GREEN	2013
185	ACE019a	Proportion of households in fuel poverty (low income/high cost rule)	11.5	2013	11.4	AMBER	11.4	AMBER	10.4 RED	11.8* GREEN	2013
186	RES/034b	Staff - total headcount (excluding schools)	8,538	As at Mar 2016	8,564	NA	8,954	NA			
187	RES/035b	Staff - total full time equivalent (excluding schools)	7,049	As at Mar 2016	7,057	NA	7,450	NA			
188	RES/020	Percentage of time lost to sickness in rolling year (excluding schools)	4.61	2015/16	4.8	GREEN	4.80	GREEN			
Page 169 41	RES/052	Percentage of posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	50.32	2015/16	47.89	GREEN	45.02	GREEN			

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
Page 42 190	RES/036	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [2] [3]	17	Jan - Mar 2016	13	NA	15	NA			

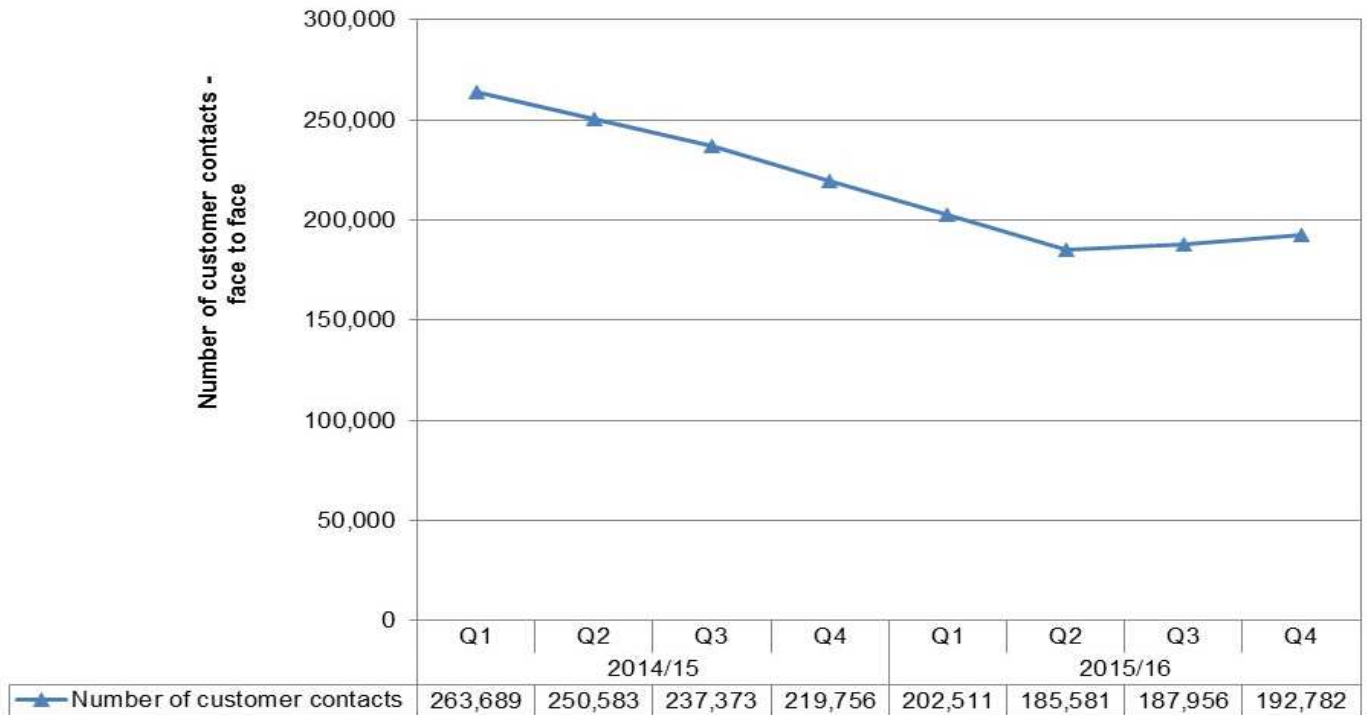
- [1] Due to changes to the definition data are not comparable/available  
[2] Data 12 months earlier amended (final published data)/refreshed  
[3] Previous period data amended (final published data)/refreshed

## Appendix 4: Volume Measures

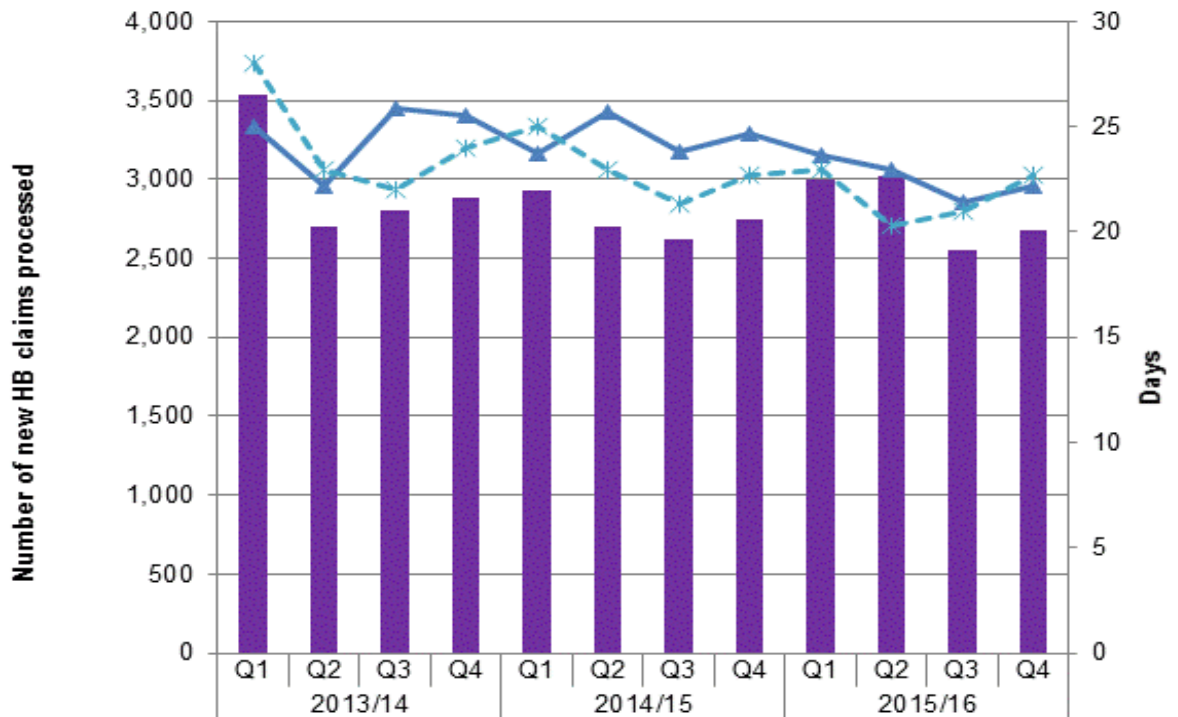
### Chart 1 – Telephone calls



### Chart 2 – Face to face contacts

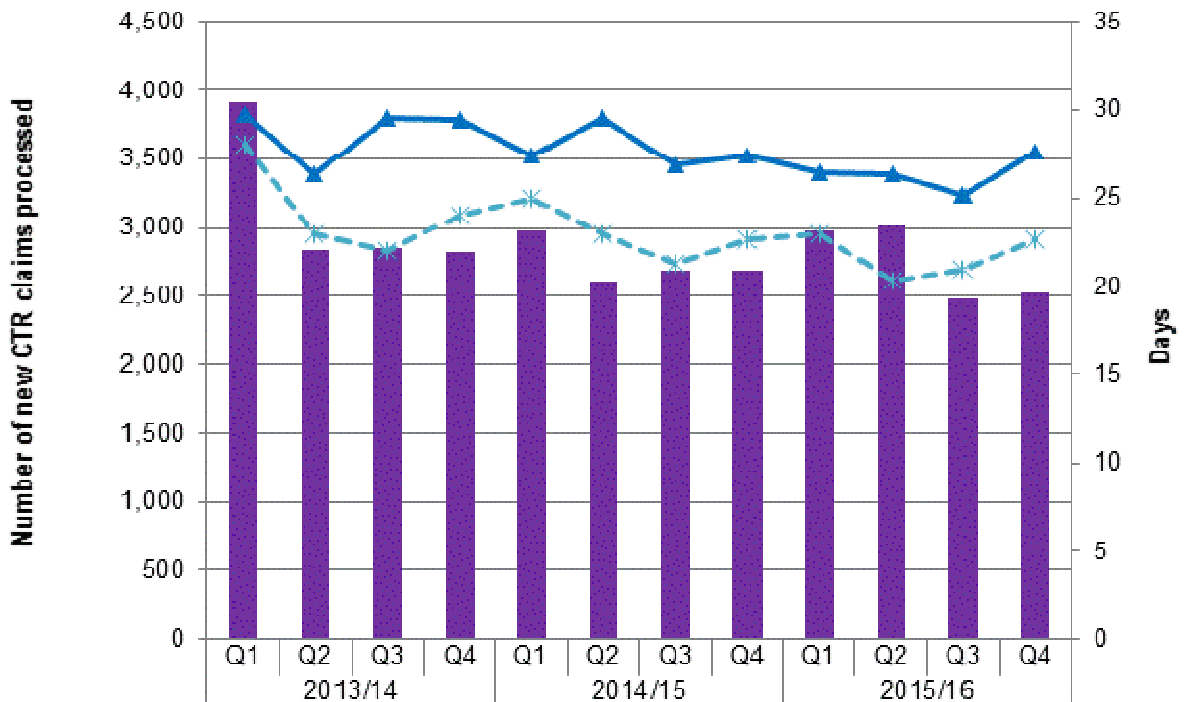


**Chart 3 – Housing Benefits – new claims**



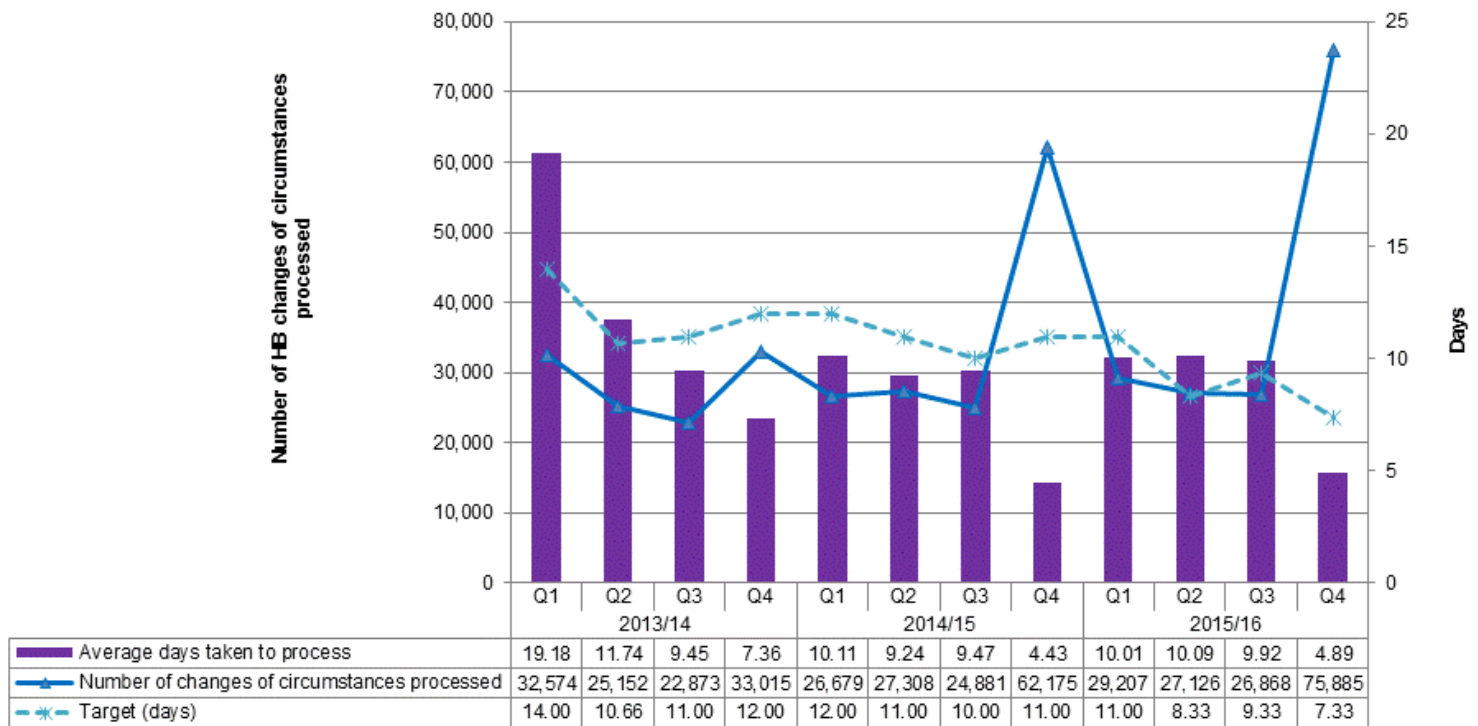
■ Average days taken to process claims	26.53	20.23	21.02	21.62	21.93	20.28	19.64	20.60	22.52	22.68	19.16	20.06
▲ Number of claims processed	3,334	2,962	3,453	3,407	3,160	3,429	3,174	3,291	3,149	3,056	2,856	2,956
-* Target (days)	28.00	23.00	22.00	24.00	25.00	23.00	21.33	22.66	23.00	20.33	21.00	22.66

**Chart 4 – Council Tax Reduction – new claims**



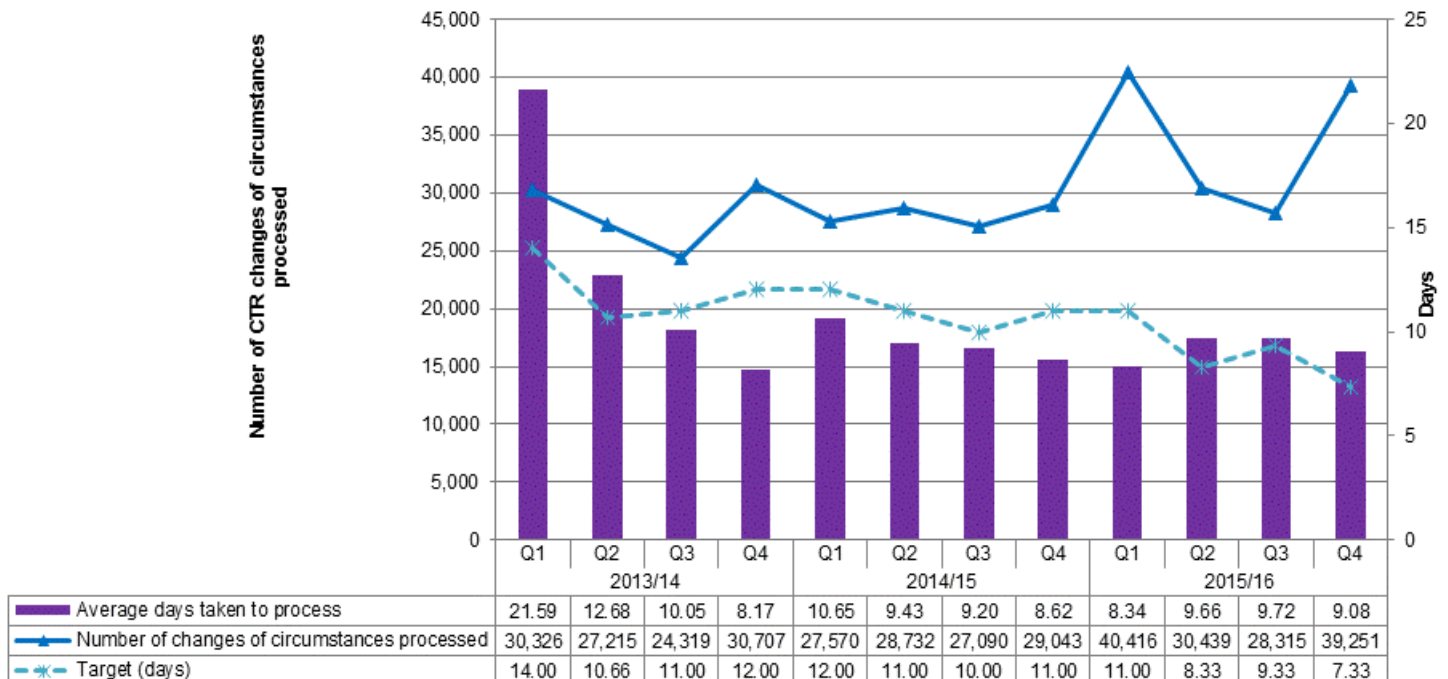
■ Average days taken to process claims	30.46	22.11	22.18	21.93	23.1	20.31	20.9	20.93	23.16	23.47	19.33	19.68
▲ Number of claims processed	3,822	3,389	3,801	3,787	3,531	3,798	3,453	3,531	3,401	3,385	3,244	3,554
-* Target (days)	28.00	23.00	22.00	24.00	25.00	23.00	21.33	22.66	23.00	20.33	21.00	22.66

**Chart 5 – Housing Benefits – changes of circumstances**



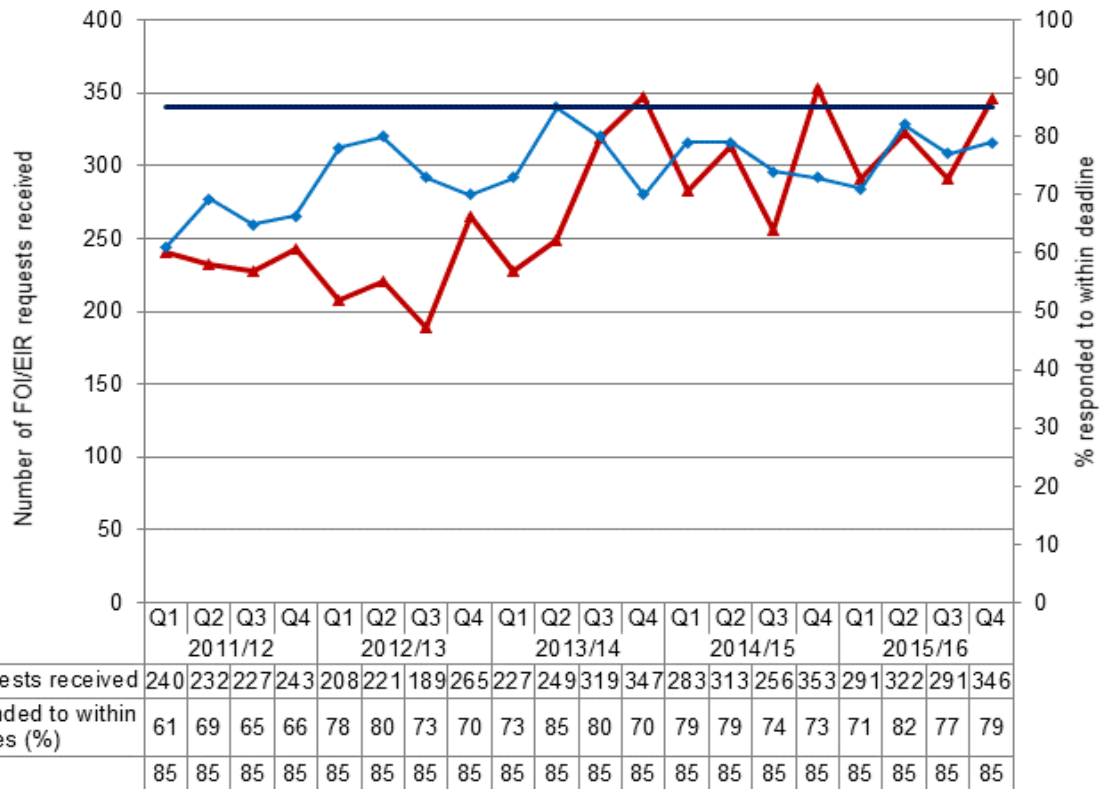
The way in which the change of circumstance is processed changed in quarter one 2015/16, which means that some multi-changes are now counted more than once where previously it would have been counted as just one change. Volume data for 2015/16 is therefore not comparable with previous data.

**Chart 6 – Council Tax Reduction – changes of circumstances**



The way in which the change of circumstance is processed changed in quarter one 2015/16, which means that some multi-changes are now counted more than once where previously it would have been counted as just one change. Volume data for 2015/16 is therefore not comparable with previous data.

**Chart 7 – Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests**





**Appendix 5: Proposed 2016/17 Corporate Indicator set and 3 year targets**

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service	Frequency	Performance		2015/16 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2014/15	2015/16 Q3		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>											
Tracker	NS43a	Number of customer contacts- face to face	NS	Quarterly	219,756	187,956					
Tracker	NS43b	Number of customer contacts-telephone	NS	Quarterly	989,422	1,015,211					
Tracker	NS43c	Number of customer contacts- web forms	NS	Quarterly	16,886	53,997 (Apr – Dec)					
Tracker	NS43d	Number of customer contacts- emails	NS	Quarterly	New indicator	48661 (Apr - Dec)					
Tracker	NS7e	Number of customer contacts- social media	NS	Quarterly	New indicator	2,234					
Tracker	NS20	Percentage of abandoned calls	NS	Quarterly	5	6	12				
Tracker	NS9	Average time taken to answer a telephone call	NS	Quarterly	New indicator	New indicator					
Target	NS25	Percentage of customers with an appointment at a customer access point who are seen on time	NS	Quarterly	No data reported	No data reported	95	95	95	95	
Target	RES/038	Percentage of all ICT Service Desk incidents resolved on time	RES	Quarterly	93	94	90	90	90	90	
Tracker	RES/013	Staff aged under 25 as a percentage of post count	RES	Quarterly	5.52	5.69					
Tracker	RES/014	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	RES	Quarterly	38.8	39.89					
Tracker	RES/LPI/011a	Women in the top 5% of earners	RES	Quarterly	52.03	52.54					

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service	Frequency	Performance		2015/16 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2014/15	2015/16 Q3		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
Tracker	RES/LPI/011b(i)	Black and minority ethnic (BME) as a percentage of post count	RES	Quarterly	1.53	1.57					
Tracker	RES/LPI/011c(i)	Staff with disability as a percentage of post count	RES	Quarterly	2.73	2.75					
Tracker	RES/028	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by social sector size criteria	RES	Quarterly	994,067.33	464,294.50					
Tracker	RES/029	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by Local Housing Allowance Reforms	RES	Quarterly	131,569.00	108,986.47					
Tracker	ACE016	Percentage of children in poverty (quarterly proxy measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	ACE	Quarterly	22.7	22.5 (Q1)					16.1 (as at Aug 2015)
Tracker	ACE017	Percentage of children in poverty (national annual measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	ACE	Annual Q2	22.6 (2012)	22.5 (2013)					18.6 (2013)
Tracker	ACE019a	Proportion of Households in Fuel Poverty (low Income / High Cost rule)	ACE	Annual Q2	11.4 (2012)	11.5 (2013)					13.9 (2012)
Target	RES/NI/181a1	Time taken to process new Housing Benefit	RES	Quarterly	20.61	19.16	22	22	22	22	23 (Jul - Sep)

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service	Frequency	Performance		2015/16 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2014/15	2015/16 Q3		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
		claims (days)									2015)
Target	RES/NI/181a2	Time taken to process new Council Tax Reduction claims (days)	RES	Quarterly	21.29	19.33	22	22	22	22	
Target	RES/NI/181b1	Time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	RES	Quarterly	7.33	9.92	10	10	10	10	10 (Jul - Sep 2015)
Target	RES/NI/181b2	Time taken to process change of circumstances for Council Tax Reduction claims (days)	RES	Quarterly	9.46	9.72	10	10	10	10	
Target	RES/002	Percentage of Council Tax Collected In-Year	RES	Quarterly	95.8	84.47	96.2	96.8	96.8	96.8	97 (2014/15)
Target	RES/003	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	RES	Quarterly	97.2	82.95	96.7	97.5	97.6	97.7	98.11 (2014/15)
Tracker	RES/034b	Staff - total head count (excluding schools)	RES	Quarterly	8,954	8,564					
Tracker	RES/035b	Staff - total full time equivalents (excluding schools)	RES	Quarterly	7,450	7,057					
Target	RES/129	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	RES	Quarterly	98.18	99.06	98.5	98.5	98.5	98.5	
Target	RES/130	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current	RES	Quarterly	99.5	99.5	98.5	98.5	98.5	98.5	

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service	Frequency	Performance		2015/16 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2014/15	2015/16 Q3		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
Page 50		year									
Target	REDPI 49b	Total of income and savings from solar installations on council owned buildings	RED	Annual Q4	214,000 (2013/14)	261,210 (2014/15)	242,000	242,000	242,000	Not set	
Target	REDPI68	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates in county council buildings	RED	Quarterly	97.1	96	97	94	93	Not set	
Target	RES/LPI/010	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	RES	Quarterly	91.4	95.2	92	93	94	94	
Target	ACE006	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines (20 working days)	ACE	Quarterly	73	77	85	85	85	85	
Tracker	RES/020	Percentage of time lost to sickness in rolling year (excluding schools)	RES	Quarterly	4.8	4.8					
Tracker	RES/052	Percentage posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	RES	Quarterly	45.02	47.89					
Target	RES/LPI/012	Days/shifts lost to sickness absence - all	RES	Quarterly	9.58	9.71	8.5	8.5	8.2	8	

Indicator Type	PI ref	PI Description	Service	Frequency	Performance		2015/16 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
					2014/15	2015/16 Q3		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	
		services including school staff									
Target	RES/LPI/012(a)	Days/Shifts lost to sickness absence - all services excluding school staff	RES	Quarterly	12.14	12.13	11.5	11.5	11.2	11	
Tracker	RES/TBC	Percentage of employees having 5 days or less sickness per 12 month rolling period	RES	Quarterly							
Tracker	RES/036	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) Incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive	RES	Quarterly	15	10					
Target	RES/011	Percentage of performance appraisals completed in current post in rolling year (excludes schools)	RES	Quarterly	83.89	83.75	90	92	94	95	

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## Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 July 2016



### Scrutiny review of Attendance Management – Update on progress against recommendations

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## Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and Paul Darby, Interim Corporate Director of Resources

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### Purpose of the Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress made against the recommendations from the Scrutiny review of Attendance Management.

### Background

- 2 At the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014, during consideration of the Quarter 3 Performance Management report, reference was made to performance in respect of sickness absence targets not being met within Durham County Council. At this time questions were raised regarding the sickness absence management policy, the process of recording and managing sickness absence, the role of line managers in reducing sickness levels and the training available to staff. There was also interest in the link between appraisal completion and absence levels.
- 3 A Task and Finish Group of Corporate Issues OSC Members was set up to look at Attendance Management, and evidence was gathered over a series of 5 meetings. A presentation was given to the group on 28 September 2015 which highlighted key findings from the review and at which members of the group agreed a series of recommendations.
- 4 Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on and agreed the review report at the meeting on 17 November 2015 and a copy of that report is attached at Appendix 2 for members' information. This report was also presented to and agreed by Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

### Recommendations from the review

- 5 The review made the following recommendations:
  1. The Working Group recommends the adoption of the draft Attendance Management Policy subject to those comments identified within paragraph 37 of this review report being considered for inclusion therein.

2. The Working Group recommends that the Council continues to target long-term sickness absence as the key cause of below target sickness absence performance.
3. The Working Group recommends that upon approval of the draft Attendance Management Policy, compulsory training be given to all DCC managers on the application of the new policy and associated procedures, making the links to such training as stress awareness, manual handling, workstation assessment and annual appraisal awareness; that this is incorporated into the Durham Managers' Programme and that the percentage of managers trained be reported to Scrutiny at appropriate intervals.
4. The Working Group recommends that the current automated "reminder triggers" within the My View system be amended to send a reminder to managers after 20 calendar days that a Sickness Absence interview needs to be undertaken in the event that this has not already occurred and the escalation to senior manager e-mail after a further 7 days.
5. The Working Group recommends that a review of the current OHS referral process be undertaken to include establishing a target for referral into the OHS service of 30 calendar days; an analysis of the impact upon OHS of implementing this target and an immediate referral into OHS for those employees whose absence has been due to mental wellbeing.
6. The Working Group recommends that staff, managers and Trade Unions be engaged in the examination of suggested changes to the Attendance Management policy arising from this review in respect of My View Sickness Absence Interview reminders and the development of OHS referral targets.
7. The Working Group recommends that a more comprehensive Council-wide staff survey be undertaken to inform organisational development, which would gather staff opinions on such issues as Health and wellbeing; attendance management; appraisals; council policy; training and development and organisational culture with Councillors having direct input into the content of the questions via scrutiny.
8. The Working Group recommends that that the Council review its current provision for the promotion of "Better Health at Work" and examine the potential to develop a more proactive and targeted approach to health and wellbeing promotion amongst its workforce.
9. The Working Group recommends that following implementation of the Attendance Management Policy and in the event that attendance management performance has not shown improvement following sustained monitoring, a review of all trigger points within the policy be undertaken.
10. It is further recommended that a systematic review of the report and progress made against recommendations should be undertaken after consideration of this report by Cabinet, within six months.



## **Systematic Review**

- 6 The pro-forma attached at Appendix 3 provides an update on the recommendations of the final report.

## **Recommendations**

- 7 The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:-
- (a) Note the update on the recommendations of the Scrutiny review of Attendance Management.

## **Background papers**

Scrutiny Review of Attendance Management report

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### **Contacts:**

**Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance, Assistant Chief Executive's - Tel: 03000 268 071**

**Jeff Garfoot, Head of Corporate Finance and HR, Resources – Tel. 03000 261946**

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**Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance - None**

**Staffing - None**

**Risk - None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None**

**Accommodation - None**

**Crime and Disorder - None**

**Human Rights - None**

**Consultation - None**

**Procurement - None**

**Disability Issues – None**

**Legal Implications - None**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW – Attendance Management

### Review of recommendations considered by CIOSC 17 November 2015 and Cabinet 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Review Recommendation	Progress Report of Action taken to implement recommendation	Resib'ty	Timescale
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> The Working Group recommends the adoption of the draft Attendance Management Policy subject to those comments identified within paragraph 37 of this review report being considered for inclusion therein.</p>	<p>The following information was sent to Extended Management Team and Tier 4 Managers on 6 April 2016 to advise of the implementation of the Attendance Management Policy:</p> <p>‘The Sickness Absence Policy has been reviewed and is now called the Attendance Management Policy and focusses on rehabilitation to support attendance at work. The main changes to the policy include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early intervention from Occupational Health</li> <li>• Shorter timescales for arranging Attendance Management Interviews (previously Sickness Absence Interviews)</li> <li>• Revised procedure for managing short-term absences with no underlying medical condition which includes mandatory target setting and hearings where sanctions may be issued</li> <li>• Long term absence first stage interview to be held within 4 weeks</li> <li>• Consistent approach introduced for phased returns to work</li> </ul> <p>The new Attendance Management Policy together with Managers Guidance and supporting documentation can be found on the intranet under the following link:</p> <p><a href="http://intranet/Pages/PoliciesandProceduresDetails.aspx?ItemId=3495">http://intranet/Pages/PoliciesandProceduresDetails.aspx?ItemId=3495</a></p> <p>The policy will be published more widely to employees via a news item on the front page of the intranet tomorrow together with an article in Buzz next week.</p> <p>I should be grateful if you can advise your teams of the new Attendance Management Policy through team meetings etc. and ensure that your managers and employees familiarise themselves with their responsibilities.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>

<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> The Working Group recommends that the Council continues to target long-term sickness absence as the key cause of below target sickness absence performance.</p>	<p>A mandatory e-learning course to support managers/supervisors to manage attendance under the new policy is available and is to be completed by <b>31 May 2016</b>. There is a link to e-learning under 'Other Stuff' on the front page of the intranet. Once logged in, the Attendance Management course can be found under the 'Corporate Courses' category. Can Tier 4 managers please ensure that all managers/supervisors who manage attendance complete the course accordingly.</p> <p>Please contact Joanna Coppillie or your HR Business Lead if you wish to discuss further'.</p> <p>The policy has also been publicised to employees through the following corporate communication mechanisms as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• News item on the front page of the intranet – 7 April 2016</li> <li>• Buzz Magazine – 14 April 2016</li> <li>• Employee Update – 18 May 2016</li> <li>• Payslip message – 30 June 2016</li> </ul>		
	<p>Long-term sickness absence continues to be targeted as a priority area.</p> <p>The new Attendance Management Policy states:</p> <p>'Before the employee reaches 6 months of continuous or aggregated absence within the rolling year, the manager must consider whether the absence can be sustained. At that point, the employee will be advised that any further assessment of their position will be made via a final stage interview. The manager must re-refer the employee to the OHS and have received their report prior to the final stage interview'.</p> <p>In 2015/16 56 employees were dismissed as a result of long term sickness absence.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>

	<p>Key information is provided to Service Management Teams on the management of long term sickness absence together with exception reporting to both service management teams and CMT for employees who have been absent longer than 12 months to ensure that the appropriate action is being taken.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> The Working Group recommends that upon approval of the draft Attendance Management Policy, compulsory training be given to all DCC managers on the application of the new policy and associated procedures, making the links to such training as stress awareness, manual handling, workstation assessment and annual appraisal awareness and that this is incorporated into the Durham Managers' Programme. That the percentage of managers trained be reported to Scrutiny at appropriate intervals</p>	<p>The new Attendance Management Policy has been supported by training for managers through an e-learning course. There are 1413 managers/supervisors enrolled on the course and since the launch of the policy on 6 April 2016, 703 managers have successfully completed this training as at 6 June 2016. The course is mandatory for all managers/supervisors who are responsible for managing attendance and completion is monitored through a learning management system and on completion of the course, training records are automatically updated on ResourceLink. Reminders will be sent to tier 4 managers in June 2016 to ensure any outstanding training is completed by their managers/supervisors.</p> <p>Bespoke sessions have been delivered by the HR Advice and Support Team to Service Management Teams to advise of the main changes to the policy and to identify support and initiatives to manage attendance within individual areas.</p> <p>Face-to-face attendance management training continues to be delivered as part of the Corporate Training Programme.</p> <p>An e-learning course is also available to managers on recognising and managing stress in the workplace which has been promoted through attendance management groups. 209 managers have completed this training as at 6 June 2016. A requirement of this training is for managers to complete the Health and Safety Executive Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool to identify their own behaviours to help alleviate work related stress. This training provides a timely intervention for managers who have to deal with stress related issues in the workplace.</p> <p>Courses continue to be offered through the Durham Manager programme on health and safety together with softer skills such as</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p> <p>On-going</p>

<p>Page</p>	<p>dealing with difficult conversations. These courses support managers to deal effectively with employment related matters such as attendance management.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> The Working Group recommends that the current automated “reminder triggers” within the My View system be amended to send a reminder to managers after 20 calendar days that a Sickness Absence interview needs to be undertaken in the event that this has not already occurred and the escalation to senior manager e-mail after a further 7 days.</p>	<p>A reminder alert has been added to the suite of alerts to advise the manager at 20 calendar days that an Attendance Management Interview is still outstanding.</p> <p>The first escalation message to senior manager has been brought forward to 37 days (as well as the existing 44 day reminder).</p>	<p>Head of Financial Services and HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b> The Working Group recommends that a review of the current OHS referral process be undertaken to include establishing a target for referral into the OHS service of 30 calendar days; an analysis of the impact upon OHS of implementing this target and an immediate referral into OHS for those employees whose absence has been due to mental wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Referral Target to OHS of 30 days</b> The new Attendance Management Policy requires staff on long term sickness absence to undergo a First Stage Attendance Management Interview with their manager at c. 2 weeks of absence. This is consistent with good practice and has an evidence base for effectiveness in reducing subsequent time away from work [NICE, 2015; NICE 2009]. OHS referral should follow where no plan for return to work is established after this initial encounter. Consequently the impact on the OHS of a stricter implementation of existing policy would result in an increased referral rate to the OHS.</p> <p>It is hoped that this increase in demand for OHS advice will be accommodated within existing resources.</p> <p><b>Immediate referral of all absences attributed to mental health issues</b> This approach would require a change to the current Attendance Management Policy, and the following points relate to reasons why this may not be a priority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line managers are already encouraged to provide employees</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>

- on sickness absence attributed to mental health issues to make contact with the DCC sponsored Employee Assistance Programme (24h telephone helpline)
- There may be potential discrimination issues in partial treatment of a particular category of sickness absence (although the intention, from the employer perspective, would be 'good').
  - Work has been undertaken to further understand the reasons behind absences attributed to mental ill health. In only a minority of cases are these recorded as work related, with other issues such as bereavement cited. This may attenuate the value of immediate referral to the OHS, where local arrangements for workplace adjustments during periods of disrupted work-life balance may be most effective.
  - There is no evidence that such early medical intervention for mental health issues is any more effective in reducing long term absence than for any other reason for absence. As such a more general approach of ensuring manager compliance with the policy and achieving the 2 week referral target of the new AMP, for all categories of absence, is best supported by the evidence for effectiveness.
  - Immediate referral to the OHS would result in a major increase in OHS referrals and run counter to the current Attendance Management Policy, in that the first stage of attendance management should always involve the line manager. This approach is supported in national evidence based guidance.
  - It is of note that the OHS already accepts referrals for 'management concern' where advice on the impact of health issues on work is sought even before any associated sickness absence. This is an example of good management and OHS practice and represents c. 30% of all clinical encounters in the OHS. These referrals frequently involve issues relating to mental health.

#### References

NICE 2015 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13>  
 NICE 2009 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph19>

<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> The Working Group recommends that staff, managers and Trade Unions be engaged in the examination of suggested changes to the Attendance Management policy arising from this review in respect of My View Sickness Absence Interview reminders and the development of OHS referral targets.</p>	<p>A comprehensive consultation exercise took place prior to the introduction of the new Attendance Management Policy.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>Complete</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> The Working Group recommends that a more comprehensive Council wide staff survey be undertaken to inform organisational development, which would gather staff opinions on such issues as Health and wellbeing; attendance management; appraisals; council policy; training and development and organisational culture. With councillors having direct input into the content of the questions via Scrutiny.</p>	<p>An annual internal communications survey is currently undertaken which includes questions on appraisals and training and development. However, options are being explored for a Council wide survey to establish a baseline to identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>An action outlined in the ACE and Resources Service plan is to undertake a council wide survey in line with agreed Scrutiny recommendation by September 2016.</p> <p>It is intended that survey information will be circulated to members of the CIOSC for information and comment prior to the council wide survey being undertaken.</p>	<p>Head of Policy and Communications/Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b> The Working Group recommends that that the Council review its current provision for the promotion of “Better Health at Work” and examine the potential to develop a more proactive and targeted approach to health and</p>	<p>A mental health and wellbeing task and finish group, represented by all service groupings, was formed in 2015 to evaluate the current interventions and assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if they enable the Council to evidence compliance with current legal requirements, national best practice and research;</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>On-going</p>



<p>wellbeing promotion amongst its workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if they are adequate and effective in relation to reducing sickness absence and current foreseeable mental health and wellbeing risk factors.</li> </ul> <p>The current mental wellbeing intranet pages have been redesigned and were launched in quarter 4 of 2015/16. These pages provide improved guidance and information to managers and staff on mental wellbeing management, support, advice and guidance. They will also link all other council procedures and guidance which directly or indirectly impact on mental wellbeing.</p> <p>New mental health awareness training for managers has also been launched via e-learning, which is being promoted through attendance management groups. This will be targeted at managers to raise understanding and awareness of mental wellbeing issues and how to manage them effectively.</p>		
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b> The Working Group recommends that following implementation of the Attendance Management Policy and in the event that attendance management performance has not shown improvement following sustained monitoring, a review of all trigger points within the policy be undertaken. It is further recommended that a systematic review of the report and progress made against recommendations should be undertaken after consideration of this report by Cabinet, within six months.</p>	<p>The new Attendance Management Policy was implemented on 6 April 2016 therefore this review will be due to be undertaken when the Quarter 2 performance information is available as at 30 September 2016.</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance and HR</p>	<p>December 2016</p>



**Corporate Issues  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**11 July 2016**



**Review of the Committee's Work Programme  
2016-17**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To provide for Members consideration an updated work programme for the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2016-17.

**Background**

- 2 At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016, the Corporate Issues O/S Committee considered the actions identified within the Council Plan 2016-19 for the Altogether Better Council priority theme and agreed to refresh its work programme to include a number of these actions.

**Detail**

- 3 In accordance with this decision, a work programme for 2016-17 has been prepared, which is attached at Appendix 2.
- 4 Members also considered potential topics for in depth scrutiny review activity at the CIOSC meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> April. Discussions highlighted that:
  - the MTFP is the ongoing area of major focus and that early involvement is important;
  - other possible areas for the CIOSC work programme included:
    - Overview of ICT;
    - A systematic review of Attendance Management, update on recommendations;
    - Progress on appraisals performance;
    - Consideration of succession planning.
- 5 Following a recommendation from the Customer First Strategy review, a review of the Customer Relationship Management System is currently taking place.

**Recommendation**

- 6 Members of the Committee are asked to agree the attached work programme.

**Background papers - Council Plan 2016 -19; Corporate Issues OSC Report 20 April 2016 – Council Plan 2016-19 – Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee.**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan.

### **Staffing**

None

### **Risk**

None

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None

### **Accommodation**

None

### **Crime and Disorder**

None

### **Human Rights**

None

### **Consultation**

None

### **Procurement**

None

### **Disability Issues**

None

### **Legal Implications**

None.

**APPENDIX 2**

<p><b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2016 TO 2017</b></p> <p><b>Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC)</b></p> <p><b>Lead Officer:</b> Jenny Haworth</p> <p><b>IPG contact:</b> Paul Darby/Jeff Garfoot</p>	<p><b>Note:</b></p> <p><b>O/S Review</b> – A systematic 6 monthly review of progress against recommendations/Action Plan</p> <p><b>Scrutiny/Working Group</b> – In-depth Review/Light Touch Review</p> <p><b>Overview/progress</b> – information on an issue; opportunity to comment, shape, influence, progress with a scrutiny review</p> <p><b>Performance/Budget</b> – ongoing monitoring (quarterly) performance reports/budgets</p>
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	<b>When</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>O/S Review</b>				
Attendance Management Policy	11 July 2016	J Haworth S Gwilym Joanne Kemp (Res)	To follow up on the recommendations of the review	To provide updates on the recommendations of the review (systematic review)
<b>Scrutiny/Working Group (Light Touch/In-depth review)</b>				
Customer Relationship Management System (Task and Finish Group)	Jan – Sept 2016	Alan Patrickson/ Cheryl Duggan	A CRM system that meets the needs of DCC, local people and Members	To provide Members with the opportunity to assess the functionality of the new CRM system, examine operational needs of members, and ‘road test’ the new system

Budget and MTFP process	10 October 2016	Jeff Garfoot/ J Haworth	To enable scrutiny Members to comment and feed into MTFP and DCC's budget setting process – and also monitor continuously as a priority for CIOSC (joint with OSMB)	A commissioned approach to look at any issues/reviews linked to achieving savings within the MTFP as and when requested
Improving efficiency and value for money	26 Jan 2017 (joint with OSMB)			Update reports considered by CIOSC
<b>Overview/Progress</b>				
Regulation of Investigatory Powers	Annual Review and Quarter 1 2016/17 10 Oct 2016  2016/17 Quarter 2 22 Nov 2016  2016/17 Quarter 3 26 Jan 2017  2016/17 Quarter 4 21 April 2017	Colette Longbottom/Clare Burrows	To inform Members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') on a quarterly basis.	Members' information  Future update to include a short presentation on RIPA types of authority operations.
Customer Feedback – Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions quarterly report	2015/16 Q4 – 11 July 2016  2016/17 Q1 – 10 Oct 2016	A Patrickson/Mary Readman	To inform Members of the Customer Feedback report on a quarterly basis	Members' information

	2016/17 Q2 – 26 Jan 2017  2016/17 Q3 – 21 April 2017			
CAS Annual Representations Report	10 Oct 2016	Gill Ward/Clare McLaren	To inform Members of the key messages in relation to the management and handling of statutory representations of CAS	Members' information
ICT Strategy Update	As and when required	Phil Jackman	To regularly update Members on ICT services	Members' information
<b>Performance/Budget</b>				
<b>Performance</b>  Quarter Reporting (Assistant Chief Executives and Resources)	Q4 2015/16 – 11 July 2016  Q1 2016/17 – 10 Oct 2016  Q2 2016/17 – 26 Jan 2017	Jenny Haworth		Standing item

	Q3 2016/17 – 21 April 2017			
	Q4 – tbc			
<b>Budget Outturn Report</b> Quarter Reporting (Assistant Chief Executives and Resources)	Q4 2015/16 and Q1 2016/17 10 Oct 2016  Q2 2016/17 – 22 Nov 2016  Q3 2016/17 – 21 April 2017	Jeff Garfoot		Standing item